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Version: Version of Record

Link(s) to article on publisher's website:

<http://dx.doi.org/doi:10.21954/ou.ro.000114fb>

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# **What is the experience of deaf students in secondary mainstream classrooms?**

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**Thesis submitted for EdD (Education)**

**The Open University**

**October 2014**

Date of Submission: 17 October 2014  
Date of Award: 26 March 2015.

# **What is the experience of deaf students in secondary mainstream classrooms?**

## **Abstract**

This investigation is concerned with the classroom experience of ten students of secondary age who are deaf and who are currently being educated in mainstream secondary schools in England. The study aims to elicit young peoples' views of their classroom experience and to show how their insights may be used to shape and improve the experiences of deaf children in mainstream schools. The authentic voice of the students is identified, separate from the influence of their teachers and their parents.

Qualitative methodology is used to focus on the experiences of the students. Following a small pilot study, an approach to interviews was designed to encourage students to speak freely about their experiences. Students were recruited from schools across England and were interviewed in their own homes by the researcher. The recordings of these in-depth interviews were transcribed and a Grounded Theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) approach was employed to identify themes in the data.

In the interviews, the students reflected on their interactions with their teachers, their friendships and their difficulties with communication in class. The findings show that the students do not identify themselves as being 'deaf people' but rather wish to be regarded as 'normal' people who happen to be deaf. The students provide evidence of the barriers to achieving this 'normality' in their classrooms. They discuss the support they are offered, the relationships with their peers and the ways in which they respond to the challenges they face.

The study considers what implications their views have for the students themselves, for the adults who support their learning and for policymakers. It is suggested that both the medical (Evans and Benefield, 2001) and social models (Shakespeare and Watson, 2010) of disability may need to be reappraised in terms of the framework they provide for guiding schools in educating their students. An alternative model, 'the risk and resilience model', (Wong, 2003; Reiff, 2004) is examined as a model that has much to offer study in this area. It is suggested that the risk and resilience model offers a better fit in terms of describing the experiences of the students and their responses to the support provided. This model also recognises the importance of the active contribution which the students make in sustaining the teacher-student relationship and the value of seeking their views on issues that might affect them.

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## **Glossary of Acronyms**

<b>BERA</b>	<b>The British Educational Research Association</b>
<b>CRIDE</b>	<b>Consortium for Research into Deaf Education</b>
<b>DfES</b>	<b>Department for Education and Skills</b>
<b>DfE</b>	<b>The Department for Education</b>
<b>DoH</b>	<b>The Department of Health</b>
<b>EHC</b>	<b>Education and Health Care Plan</b>
<b>GCSE</b>	<b>The General Certificate of Secondary Education</b>
<b>ICF</b>	<b>International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health</b>
<b>Ofsted</b>	<b>The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills</b>
<b>NDCS</b>	<b>The National Deaf Children's Society</b>
<b>RNID</b>	<b>Royal National Institute for the Deaf, now called Action on Hearing Loss</b>
<b>SEN</b>	<b>Special educational needs</b>
<b>SENCO</b>	<b>Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator</b>
<b>SEND</b>	<b>Special Educational Needs and Disability</b>
<b>TA</b>	<b>Teaching Assistant</b>
<b>UNCRC</b>	<b>The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child</b>
<b>UNESCO</b>	<b>The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization</b>
<b>UPIAS</b>	<b>Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation</b>

## **CHAPTER 1            Introduction**

### **The context**

This research focuses on deaf students in mainstream secondary schools in England. The purpose of this study is to examine critically the day to day experience of deaf students, exploring the connection between what their schools are providing and what the students are experiencing.

The research investigates the opportunities and challenges experienced by deaf students in relation to their learning, the barriers to learning they may experience and the extent to which they feel able to participate in the social and learning environment enjoyed by their hearing peers. The students who took part were in full time attendance at their local mainstream secondary school, had access to the full curriculum and were not withdrawn regularly for any special support.

The main focus of the study was the experience of the young people. The investigation was designed to allow the students to voice their thoughts, feelings and opinions on their experiences in the day to day life of their classrooms (Noyes, 2005). The data collection took place in the students' homes rather than in school, in the expectation that the students might be prepared to reflect in greater depth on their experiences if they were away from the school environment, unable to be overheard by their peers or distracted by the routine of their schools. They were assured that what they contributed would not be shared with their teachers or their parents.

The research focussed on deaf students in mainstream schools who were oral and used spoken English as their preferred language. In the UK, the majority of deaf students, 76% according to the Consortium for Research into Deaf Education (CRIDE) report (National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS), 2013a), are in mainstream schools. Only 6.2% of deaf students attend specialist units in mainstream schools. According to the report, 79.3% of deaf students communicate using English only, with 3.2% communicating by signing only. The target group for this research is therefore drawn from the setting attended by the majority of deaf

secondary aged students in the UK. The aim was to provide an insight into the experiences of oral deaf students and their views on learning in mainstream classrooms.

### **The researcher**

I came to this research after 30 years practice as an educational psychologist working in mainstream primary and secondary schools. Prior to this, I taught science in a mainstream secondary school for twelve years. I also served for twelve years as a member of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal, both as a panel member and later as an expert witness for deaf students and their families. As a part-time tutor for the Open University, I had the opportunity, over a period of more than 20 years, to teach courses in 'Special Educational Needs' which focused on the theory of inclusion and inclusive practice within schools.

For seven years, following my retirement from full time work within a Local Authority, I worked part-time in a national centre for deaf students and it is my work in this setting that has given rise to my current interest in the experience of deaf students in mainstream schools. During this time, I assessed over 200 deaf students in the presence of their parents. Conversations with them frequently involved the discussion of barriers to learning which the students were experiencing within their school settings. Most of the students came to the assessment centre because of concerns about their educational progress. In considering this investigation, I am aware that my experience might lead me to over-emphasise the difficulties faced by deaf students. I am also aware that those students referred to the national centre came with specific issues, but the majority of them were in local mainstream education and few had any intention of seeking an alternative placement.

The students seen in the centre for the deaf came from all regions of the UK and were assessed by an audiologist, a speech and language therapist and myself. As the educational psychologist, I had the opportunity to discuss the positive and negative experiences of deaf

students in their mainstream schools. It was this experience that led me towards this investigation. I wanted the opportunity to find out in greater depth what life in mainstream classrooms was like for deaf students from their perspective.

I have had opportunities to discuss learning in a classroom setting with teachers and parents and to observe lessons. However, I have been aware that, in such situations, the student's opportunity to express their opinions, needs or concerns is often limited, owing to the presence of their teachers and their parents and the unequal power relationships that result (McLeod, 2007). My current research has enabled me to listen to the students themselves, away from the influence of their parents, their peers or school staff.

### **The views of young people**

The current study is centred on 'giving voice' to the students. The importance of asking the students their views is well-established (Tangen, 2008; Nind et al., 2012). The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989) emphasises how important it is to seek the views of children directly. The Convention enshrines the right of the child to be educated, to be treated fairly and to be heard. It also makes clear the right of the child to have their views properly considered:

'Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.'(UNCRC, 1989, Article 12 (1))

In the United Kingdom, the Children Act (1989) and the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice (2001) specifically expect that children will be consulted about their school placement and the provision that will be made for them. However, once the placement has been decided and the agreed provision put in place, it cannot be assumed that what students are actually experiencing in the classroom is the same as



the experience envisaged by the adults with whom they are involved (Iantaffi et al., 2003).

### **The meaning of 'deafness'**

The students in this study are all diagnosed medically as deaf. However it would be wrong to assume that assigning such a diagnosis of a student's medical condition will contribute greatly to an understanding of the experiences they may expect in their classrooms. There are three areas that are of particular significance. Firstly there is the contested area of what being deaf might mean in terms of the personal identity of the person so described. Closely related to the matter of personal identity is the much debated issue of what constitutes 'normality' in the world of the deaf student. Finally there is the highly contentious issue of inclusion and the impact of inclusive policies on the classroom experience of deaf students. (Hyde et al., 2005; Hung and Paul, 2006)

In this investigation, the word 'deaf' with a lower case 'd' refers to someone who is partially or wholly lacking hearing. When the word is written as 'Deaf', using upper case 'D', it refers to people who identify themselves as a member of the Deaf community (McLaughlin et al., 2004). Some Deaf people see themselves as belonging to a language minority community and the associated Deaf Culture (Skelton and Valentine, 2003). The participants in this investigation are oral and spoken English is their first language, whereas the Deaf community may use a different language, for example, British Sign Language.

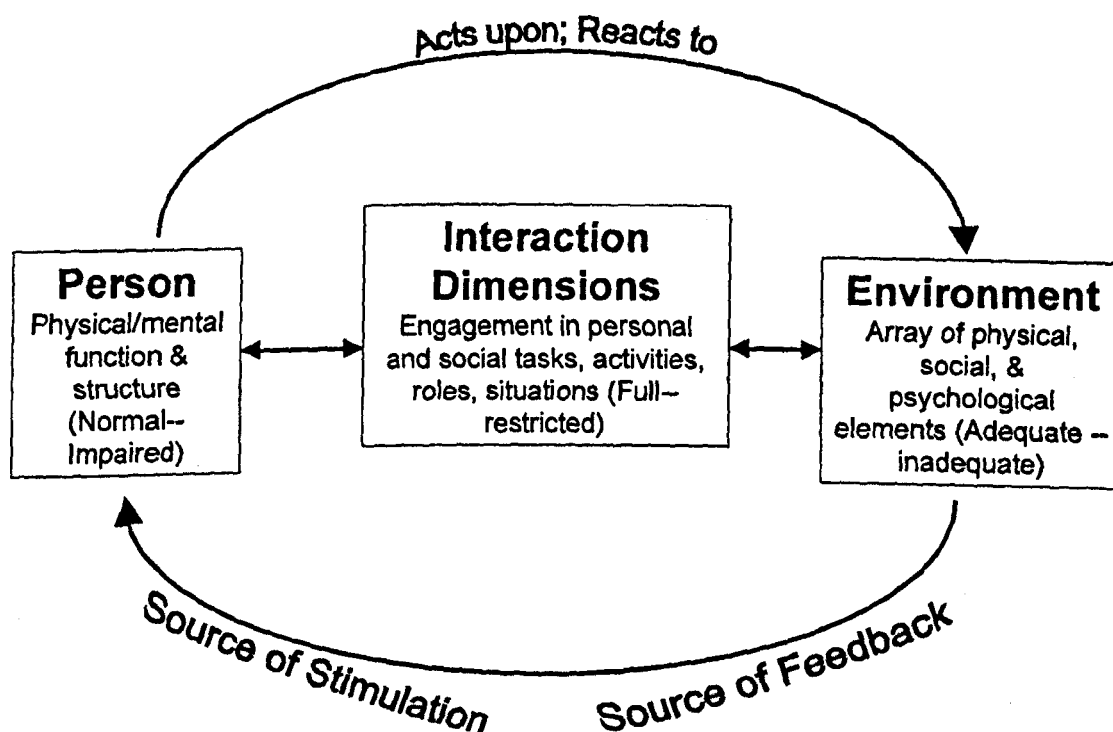
When defining deafness in relation to the extent of hearing loss, a medical/audiological definition model is being adopted. Such a definition is necessary in a medical context in which the object is to provide implants or to fit hearing aids and monitor the effectiveness of their use. Deafness is also defined using medical terminology by the Disability Rights Commission (2002). A person is defined as having a disability;

'if he or she has a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long term adverse effect on his or her ability to

carry out normal day to day activities.' (Disability Rights Commission, 2002, Appendix 1, p.117)

The term 'impairment' includes sensory impairments, for example, those affecting sight or hearing. However, there is a potential difficulty here with the definition, since many deaf students do not see themselves as disabled or impaired (Hardy, 2010). In 2002, the World Health Organisation published a document commonly known as the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF). This was a revision of an earlier document, published in 1980. The revised document (WHO, 2002) claims to put the notions of health and disability 'in a new light' (WHO, 2002, p.3). It acknowledges that disability is not something that happens only to a minority of humanity but is something that every human being can experience. ICF aims to shift the focus from cause to impact. The revision has been discussed by Simeonsson et al., (2000). They propose a model that moves away from earlier linear models of disability and attempts to capture the more dynamic relationship between personal and environmental interactions (see Figure 1).

The model shown in Figure 1 acknowledges the person and the importance of the concept of 'normality.' The debate is seen to focus on whether the individual person be regarded as 'normal' or 'impaired' and this question will be a feature of the current study. The model also draws attention to the extent to which the person is interacting in social tasks, activities, roles and situations and the extent to which physical, social and psychological elements may or may not feature in the learning environment.



**Figure 1**

**Person-environment interaction: Dimensions of functioning and disability**  
(Simeonsson et al., 2000, p. 122)

The 'interaction dimensions' and whether 'engagement' is 'full' or 'restricted' is relevant to schools, when addressing the contentious issue of whether deaf students are full members of their community both socially and academically, that is, whether they are 'included' (Powers, 2002; Hyde et al., 2005; Hung and Paul, 2006).

Another feature of the model shown in Figure 1 is the recognition of the importance of the interaction between the person and their environment. An essential feature of the current investigation is to see the students not as subjects of a study but rather as 'participants' in their own education (Ulvik, 2014; Christensen and Allison, 2008). There is an interest in finding out the extent to which deaf students interact dynamically in the academic and social life of their schools in such a way that they influence and alter outcomes.

## **The current study**

Finding participants for the study proved problematic. It was important that the students did not feel coerced into participating and that they felt comfortable and willing to give an authentic and uninhibited account of their day to day life in the classroom. It was also important to ensure the independence of the participants. The difficulty of recruiting students meant that I had to recruit people from a wide geographical area. This recruitment problem had positive outcomes in that it minimised the possibility that the participants would know each other or discuss together their participation in the current study.

At the early stages of the research, I interviewed three sixth form students as a pilot study. These students had gained their General Certificate of Secondary Education qualifications (GCSEs) in a mainstream secondary school but had transferred to a special school for the deaf to undertake their studies at A Level. The pilot study will be considered again in Chapter 3 (Methodology).

A qualitative methodology was used in both the pilot study and the current study. Data was collected by interviewing the students. In the pilot study, the students were interviewed in their school; in the main study, the students were interviewed at home. The research was based on a Grounded Theory approach (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). No assumptions were made about the possible outcome of the analysis of the data. The themes were constructed after a careful analysis of the data and the findings were reported and discussed.

In the UK, there has been one major study, conducted twelve years ago, which focused on ascertaining the views of deaf students about inclusion. The outcome of the research, commissioned by the Royal National Institute for the Deaf (RNID) (2002), has been published in book form and in two separate journal articles by Iantaffi et al. (2003) and Jarvis (2003). The current study uses the 2002 study as a benchmark, providing an opportunity to compare students' experience in 2002 with what students in the current study are experiencing.

The current research focuses on listening to the 'voices' of students who are deaf and their experience of their school and their classrooms.

Following a review of relevant literature and a pilot study, the research questions were formulated:

1. When deaf students talk about their classroom experiences, what do they believe to be the important issues?
2. How do deaf students respond to the support that they experience in mainstream schools?
3. How far can deaf students participate in and shape their school experience?

### **Structure and presentation**

In this first chapter, the study is introduced. The context and motivation for the research is outlined together with an acknowledgement of some of the 'contested and complex experiences of deaf students.' (Skelton and Valentine, 2003)

Chapter 2 provides a review of relevant literature.

The chosen methodology, ethical issues in the collection of the data and the reasons for adopting a 'grounded theory' approach are discussed in Chapter 3. I also explain how I have analysed the data and the findings.

In Chapter 4, the data is analysed and the findings presented within the themes which emerged during the analysis.

Chapter 5 reflects on the data analysis and discusses the issues which arise and the implications for the education of deaf students.

Recommendations for further investigation and final reflections on the research undertaken are included in Chapter 6.

### Introduction

This review of relevant literature is centred on the experiences of secondary aged deaf children in mainstream secondary schools, when they are included in mainstream classrooms and social settings. It sets the context of the investigation, beginning with a recent history of inclusion and the legislation and policies which have promoted an inclusive approach in the United Kingdom (UK).

The review continues with an examination of the language used to describe disability in order to consider some of the complexities of the debate relating to inclusion. It provides a description of contrasting models of disability. It also considers ways in which children, including deaf children, are consulted on matters which concern them. The particular needs of deaf children and young people are highlighted where appropriate. The review concludes by examining the literature relating to the 'voice of the child', with a particular emphasis on listening to what deaf students have to say about their experience of being included in mainstream classrooms.

There are around 38,000 deaf children in England, a reported increase of 9% in two years. Deafness is often described as a 'low incidence disability' with a prevalence of 1.65/1000 births (Fortnum et al., 2001). Research has shown that 76% of deaf children attend mainstream schools where there is no specialist provision for deaf children (NDCS, 2013a). However, the National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS), in publishing the Department for Education figures, reminds us that:

'Deafness is not a learning disability. With the right help, there is no reason why deaf children can't do as well as other children.' (NDCS, 2013b, p.1)

With this in mind, it is challenging to find statistics showing that many deaf students underachieve in school compared to their hearing peers (NDCS, 2013a). The latest government figures from the Department for Education

relate to the year 2012. 37% of deaf children, who are taken to be those students with a Statement of Special Educational Needs or who are at School Action Plus for reasons related to their deafness, achieved 5 GCSEs (including Maths and English ) at grades A\* to C, compared to 69% of children with no identified special education need. This means that 63% of deaf children are failing to achieve the government's benchmark for GCSE success, compared to just 31% of other children. At secondary level, in 2012, 55% of deaf children made the expected progress in English between Key Stage 2 and 4, compared to 75% of children with no special educational needs. In mathematics, the corresponding figures are 57% (deaf students) and 77% (students with no special educational needs (SEN)). These recent figures suggest that deaf students are not keeping up with their hearing peers in terms of academic attainment.

It is timely to examine the experience of deaf students in mainstream settings and to investigate their perception of their mainstream experience, in particular, their learning opportunities, the support they receive and what, in their opinion, might prevent them from learning.

### **Deaf children and mainstream education**

Up until the end of the 1980s, the main issue discussed by the international community and national governments in relation to special educational needs was the promotion of the rights of disabled people when considering their education. Since the 1990s, inclusion has been the paramount issue, with the concomitant question of whether the new inclusive terminology represents just a linguistic shift or whether it represents a new agenda (Vislie, 2003).

In June 1994, representatives of 92 governments and 25 international organisations attended the World Conference on Special Needs Education, held in Salamanca, Spain, under the auspices of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO). The 'Salamanca Statement' that emerged from the Conference reinforced the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and called for inclusion to be the norm. In a set of guiding principles, it was proposed

that ordinary schools should accept children regardless of physical, intellectual, social, and emotional considerations. More specifically, it was proposed that:

'Educational policies at all levels, from the national to the local, should stipulate that a child with a disability should attend the neighbourhood school, that is, the school that would be attended if the child did not have a disability.' (UNESCO, 1994, p.17)

However, it is interesting to note, in the context of the present investigation, that the Salamanca Statement, while supporting the inclusion of disabled students in mainstream provision, states that different provision might be appropriate for deaf persons:

'Owing to the particular communication needs of deaf and deaf/blind persons, their education may be more suitably provided in special schools or special classes and units in mainstream schools.' (UNESCO, 1994, p.18)

Given the wide range of disability covered by the Salamanca Statement, it is challenging that this exception is made for deaf students. Any such use of what is rather vague terminology, for example, 'the particular communication needs,' detracts from the rights of deaf students to an inclusive education and leads to a potential difficulty for policymakers when they are drafting legislation.

The rights of children, promoted by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Salamanca Statement, to be treated equally, to be free from discrimination, and to achieve the fullest possible integration have been influential in guiding educational practice in the UK and in formulating UK law with particular reference to children with disabilities.

In the United Kingdom, projects were developed under the auspices of UNESCO. An internationally influential publication, 'The Index for Inclusion: developing learning and participation in schools' (Booth and



Ainscow, 2000), adopted the new terminology and made suggestions for schools to pursue inclusive practices.

It is significant that Ainscow and César (2006), in a paper reviewing inclusive education 10 years after Salamanca, should observe that;

‘the field remains confused as to what actions need to be taken to move policy and practice forward.’ (Ainscow and César, 2006, p.231)

Part of the confusion arises because inclusion can be defined in a number of different ways (Ainscow and César, 2006; Kiuppis, 2014). Inclusion may be seen as concerned primarily with disability and special educational needs. It may also be associated with overcoming discrimination and disadvantage in vulnerable groups. Inclusion is also defined in terms relating to the notion of ‘Education for All’.

### **Special educational needs: legal considerations**

The relevant sections of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989), the Salamanca Statement and the resulting incorporation of these principles into UK legislation including the 1981 Education Act provide some explanation as to why many students ‘with special educational needs’, including children who are deaf, are currently educated in mainstream schools in the UK.

A Special Educational Needs Code of Practice was introduced in the UK in 2001 to which local authorities must pay ‘due regard’ (Department for Education and Skills (DfES), 2001). The Code of Practice outlines how the law is to be implemented when judgements are to be made about children’s education and the provision that must be made for them. The term ‘due regard’ is often found in legal documents where it is defined as:

‘to give a fair consideration to and give sufficient attention to all of the facts.’ (Black’s Law Dictionary)

In terms of the Code of Practice, however, the definition above is too general to promote entitlement or to truly reflect the legal requirements on

local authorities.

The Code of Practice, effective from 1 January 2002, had its origin in the Education Acts of 1993 and 1996, which took into account the requirements of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989). The new Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Code of Practice, which came into force in September 2014, also refers to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Department for Education (DfE) and Department of Health (DoH), 2014, p.13) and gives guidance for local authorities when carrying out their duties under the Children and Families Act (2014). Local authority services are required to work together when this promotes children and young people's wellbeing to improve the quality of special educational provision. Further, local authorities and health bodies must have arrangements in place to plan and commission education, health and social services jointly for children 'with SEN or disabilities.'

If the parents do not agree with the school proposed by the local authority, the parents have a right to appeal to the First-tier Tribunal where they can contest the proposed provision:

'The local authority **must** also tell the parents or young person of their right to appeal to the SEN Tribunal against the decision'.  
(DfE and DoH, 2014, p 102)

There is an additional duty for local authorities, enshrined in the Equality Act 2010, to ensure there is no discrimination. It states that the 'Responsible Body' i.e. the local authority:

'must not discriminate against a person

- (a) in the arrangements it makes for deciding who is offered admission as a pupil;
- (b) as to the terms on which it offers to admit the person as a pupil;
- (c) by not admitting the person as a pupil.' (Equality Act, 2010, section 85)

Although the extensive legislation on inclusive education puts an obligation on schools to include all students, the way in which the legislation manifests itself in individual schools may not reflect a single understanding of what the legislation intends or determine the individual experiences of the students in their day to day lives. The link between the legislation and practice requires further consideration.

### **A working definition of inclusion**

It is often assumed that inclusion is essentially about educating 'disabled' students or those who are regarded as 'having' special educational needs in mainstream schools. Such an approach is contested (Dyson, 1999) in that it may narrow the focus of inclusion to special educational needs and ignore the many other ways, in terms of social relationships and out of school activities, in which student participation may be enhanced or indeed reduced.

The term inclusion is taken to mean that all the students in a mainstream school, including deaf students, will be considered as full members of the classroom and school communities (Antia et al., 2002). Inclusion implies that the teaching and learning in mainstream classes will change to accommodate all the different learners and that special services will be offered to children with special needs within the mainstream classroom, rather than being provided for them outside the classroom. It is assumed that, in an inclusive setting, it is the classroom teacher, rather than a specialist teacher, who has the main responsibility for educating all the children in the classroom (Jenkins et al., 1990).

However inclusion is not just a question of children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) attending mainstream school and being educated alongside peers who have no SEN. The principle of inclusion has far wider implications for educational policy and for inclusive practice in schools. Powers (2002) seeks to encompass this wider view of inclusion in a working definition:

'Inclusive education is best conceived as a response to student diversity based on principles of equity and acceptance that aim

to give all children equal rights to participation in mainstream curricula and communities, as valued, accepted, and fully participating members of those communities, and also rights to achieve as much as they can academically, physically, and in their social- emotional development.' (Powers, 2002, p. 237)

This definition recognises that deaf students are entitled to an educational experience that maximises their academic and social development and enables them to make a full contribution to the mainstream opportunities they experience.

### **Issues relating to inclusion**

Following the working definition of inclusive education above, there are a number of issues that might need to be taken into account whenever deaf students are considered for placement in mainstream education (Powers, 2002). Powers suggests that an inclusive placement should offer opportunities for interaction between deaf and hearing students. This would clearly be following the principle that students should not be defined in terms of their disability. Secondly, Powers suggests that there should be access for the students to a formal academic curriculum, which would normally be the same academic curriculum that is offered to all the students in the school. The third consideration presented by the author, is that deaf students should have access to a wide range of extracurricular activities. A fourth consideration is that the students would have access to teachers and learning assistants who would have the necessary skills and attitudes to teach them effectively. Finally, Powers suggests that the students and their parents should be offered more opportunities to be involved in decisions which may affect them (Powers, 2002).

The principles described above are clear but some researchers have suggested that, in practice, there may be barriers to their implementation. It is important to note that some investigations (Yun et al., 2001; Hung and Paul, 2006; Angelides and Aravi, 2006) have reported on difficulties experienced by deaf students in mainstream school. Angelides and Aravi (2006) found, in research comparing the perspectives of deaf and hard of

hearing students in mainstream and special schools, that the two main problems found in mainstream schools, but not in special schools, were to do with communication and alienation. The students claimed that in special schools for the deaf they had:

‘more opportunities to develop interpersonal relationships’

(Angelides and Aravi, 2006, p.481).

It is important to be aware that the study Angelides and Aravi (2006) undertook was a retrospective study involving adults reflecting back on their school experience, in contrast to the present study, which is focused on students who are currently in school. However, important issues are being raised here, including communication and alienation, which are worthy of further consideration in developing the current research.

### **Researching deaf students in mainstream placements**

In relation to the general population, the number of students who might be considered deaf or hard of hearing is low. In consequence, some research approaches involving large groups of participants that might be possible with larger populations and with other disabilities are not open to investigations with the deaf population. There are also difficulties associated with identifying a group of deaf and hard-of-hearing students who can be taken to be a representative sample of deaf students as a whole ( Marschark & Spencer, 2010). Many deaf students are the only deaf student in their school and may feel isolated. They do not necessarily have contact with other deaf students, especially if deafness is the only characteristic they have in common (Nunes et al., 2001).

Another consideration, when conducting research, is that deaf students in school today are not comparable with deaf students of ten years ago and some previous findings may lack relevance in the current situation (Mitchell & Kárchmer, 2006). Research into the experiences of deaf students in the recent past, could not have anticipated the impact that early intervention, improved hearing aids and increasingly sophisticated technology would have had on the educational opportunities of deaf

students (Marschark and Spencer 2010). These changes inevitably have implications for students who are included in mainstream education.

An additional area of importance is the recognition that there is no one system or approach that will meet the needs of all students. The population of deaf students is as diverse as the population of hearing students (Oliver, 2013) and it is necessary to consider the individual needs, strengths and experiences of the students.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted, 2012), in reporting on deaf children in mainstream placements, focussed on both academic and social issues. The report observed that:

'Deaf children are at greater risk of linguistic, cultural and social isolation than their hearing peers. Eighty-one per cent of school-aged deaf children are in mainstream settings. While the educational attainment of deaf children has improved year on year it continues to lag well behind that of their hearing peers.'

(Ofsted, 2012 p. 4)

The development of meaningful relationships may have implications for a student's well-being and their academic progress. While there are individual studies looking at deaf students and their peer relationships, Batten et al. (2013) noted that no systematic review of the findings had taken place to date. However, from their review of the literature, Batten et al. (2013) concluded that programmes aimed at developing deaf children's relationships with their hearing peers should begin at a young age. They also highlighted the value of extracurricular involvement as a way of fostering communication and social skills. Of particular relevance to this study, because the target group for the current investigation includes deaf adolescents, is their finding that

'older adolescents may be at a socio-emotional disadvantage in fully integrated settings.' (Batten et al. 2013, p.15)

The importance of providing individual support for deaf students while they attempt to develop useful social relationships with their peers is

considered in relation to the consequences for them in later life. Having been exposed to the risk of not developing social relationships and subsequently finding a way to minimise the risk, future exposure to similar risks may have less impact. This in turn would 'increase their resilience against any future challenges' (Batten, 2013, p. 1).

When investigating the experiences of students in mainstream classes, investigators might decide to obtain their raw data by asking the students, parents or teachers for their opinion as to how the children are progressing. If this approach is adopted, there is a need to be sure that the information supplied by the parents reflects the reality as experienced by the child. Deaf children as young as 5-12 years are aware if they are falling behind their hearing peers in reading and social relationships but their judgement may differ from that of their parents, who may perceive their children to be more successful than the children regard themselves (Marschark et al., 2012). Of particular relevance to this investigation is the reminder that accepting parents' judgement about the social successes of their children without talking to the children themselves may produce unreliable evidence (Marschark et al., 2012).

The emphasis in the current investigation is on the students themselves and it is the language the students use when talking about themselves that is of paramount importance. An exploration of the preferred language of the students in describing their deafness may provide useful insight into their internal view of their world.

### **The language describing disability and deafness**

The statement from the National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS, 2013b), referred to in the introduction to this review (p.12), that deafness is not a learning disability, opens up a debate about how deafness should be described. Knowing how to describe deafness is an area of controversy in which definitions may be seen to 'contradict, overlap, coexist and compete' (Skelton and Valentine, 2003, p.451). If deafness is not a learning disability, then there is a need to consider what language should

be used to describe deafness and importantly what language is preferred by the deaf students when they are talking about their own experiences.

Hearing people often equate deafness with disability but deaf people themselves may not (Skelton and Valentine, 2003). As previously noted, some people who are deaf and who are most often competent in the use of sign language would rather see themselves as being part of a linguistic minority and would prefer to be known as Deaf with a capital 'D'. With this in mind, it would be a misrepresentation to discuss the identities and lives of deaf people as if they were part of a homogenous group.

### **'Normality'**

Labelling of 'special needs' has tended to centre on socially constructed concepts. An example is the use of the term 'normality.' The concept of 'normality' supposes that there is a right, that is 'normal', way of learning and any deviations from this right way should be labelled as deviating from 'normality':

'Since so much of the burden a disability or learning difficulty places on individuals is thus socially constructed - the result of attitudes and attributions by those who deem themselves without disability or able to learn normally- all the more reason for all those in education, governors, managers and teachers to make their central concern the ways an individual learns and how they can be accommodated' (Tomlinson, 1996, p.5).

Being labelled can result in marginalisation which students so labelled may choose to resist as it can result in the students becoming 'othered'. Othering is a process that seeks to identify those who are thought to be different from oneself or not 'mainstream' (Johnson et al., 2004).

'By talking about individuals or groups as *other*, one magnifies and enforces projections of apparent difference from oneself. Othering practices can, albeit unintentionally, serve to reinforce and reproduce positions of domination and subordination (Fine, 1994). Consequently persons who are treated as other often



experience marginalisation, decreased opportunities, and exclusion.' (Johnson et al., 2004, p.254)

• People who are deaf may describe themselves in different ways when referring to their deafness (Bat-Chava, 2000; Iantaffi et al., 2003) even though an objective observer might think that what they are describing is identical. Being deaf in contemporary Britain has been described as a 'complex and contested experience' (Skelton and Valentine, 2003, p.452).

It has long been an aspiration by educators (Nirje, 1969) to achieve the goal of 'normalising' people who are seen as having disabilities. However, achieving a common understanding of what 'normalisation' may involve may be a challenge.

Wolfensberger (2011), suggests that:

'Any review of the literature.... will disclose that once people hear or see the term "normalization," a large proportion (apparently even the vast majority) assume—usually wrongly—that they know "what it means".' (Wolfensberger, 2011, p.435)

Wolfensberger (2011) has attempted to clarify the principle of normalisation by suggesting the highest goal of the principle of normalisation to be-

'the establishment, enhancement or defense of the social role(s) of a person or group, via the enhancement of people's social images and personal competencies.' (Wolfensberger, 2011, p.435)

Normalisation has been defined as:

'the identification with or adoption of the norms of a reference group.' (Morse et al., 2000, p.16)

The participants in the RNID study (2002) describe their peers with whom they interact on a daily basis in such a way that it is clear this is their reference group. They compare themselves with their hearing peers and

indicate that they like to fit in with this group. The students discuss how they are the same as and are different from their reference group.

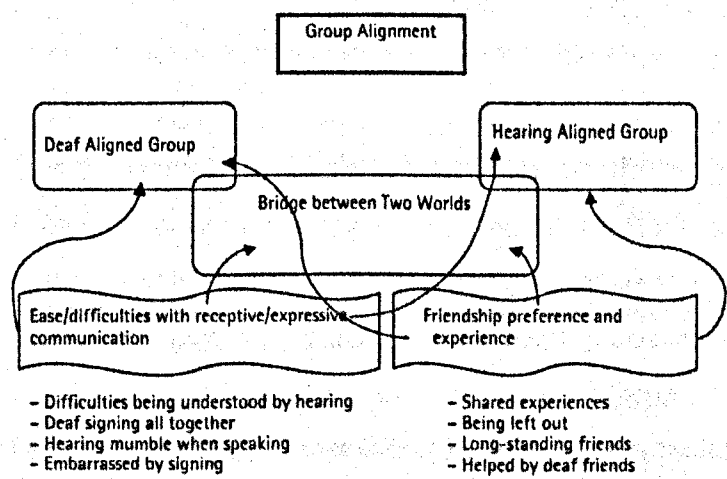
**Deafness and personal identity**

In a recent study, Hardy (2010) investigated the development of a sense of identity in deaf adolescents in mainstream schools. Her research question was:

‘What awareness and ideas do adolescents (aged 13 to 16) with severe and profound hearing loss, attending mainstream schools, have about their developing deaf identity?’ (Hardy, 2010, p. 58)

What makes this study particularly pertinent in relation to the current study is that the data is derived from the students directly.

In Hardy’s investigation (2010), the factors that determined the groups in which the students placed themselves were issues relating to communication and their previous and current experience of friendships. The students identified themselves with one of three groups, deaf aligned, hearing aligned or the bridge between two worlds (see Figure 2). This study highlights issues such as group alignment, communication and friendships which may be pertinent to the current investigation.



**Figure 2: What influences group alignment for deaf adolescents in mainstream schools? (Hardy, 2010, p. 65)**

The findings of Hardy’s investigation (2010) fit with that of Bat Chava’s

investigation (2000) in which he identified three types of adult deaf identity: 'hearing identity' (perceiving deafness as a disability), 'immersion' (perceiving deafness as a culture), and bicultural (where perceiving deafness has features of both hearing and immersion). Bat Chava found that dynamic factors such as developing independence, self-awareness and social awareness influenced changes in group alignment over time.

The debate and confusion that surrounds deaf students - how they see themselves and how others see them - arises to some extent from the conceptual frameworks adopted by those working in the field. In order to illustrate such debate, it is useful to consider three models of disability and to compare and contrast their contribution.

### **The debate relating to models of disability**

Adults who provide support for deaf students may be seen to act, consciously or unconsciously, according to a set of principles based on a theoretical framework or model. These principles may influence the way in which they seek to support deaf students. Thus exploring the models may assist in understanding the kind of support which is provided to deaf students and the relationships that exist between deaf students, their teachers and their support staff.

By the time students have entered secondary school, they will have been assessed by doctors, psychologists, speech and language therapists and their teachers of the deaf, most often in the presence of their parents. Each of these professionals may leave an impression on the student and their parents which influences how the students perceive themselves and how those supporting them may perceive their roles (Hintermair, 2006). In their day to day life in the classroom, students are constrained in the way they can behave towards their peers and towards the adults who are involved in teaching them. What students experience is often delivered to them as a programme to which they are expected to respond without being offered an opportunity to contribute. The people who devise educational programmes do so having made decisions, albeit based on

research, experience and current policy, about what the students require for social and academic success, without considering the individual attributes of the students. What a deaf student regards as their needs in the classroom can differ from what is being delivered to them (Antia et al., 2002). Much may depend on investigating the ways in which the term 'disability' is perceived and how disability is managed.

Therefore in order to explore the implications of educating deaf students in mainstream classrooms, three models of disability will be described in some detail and the implications for the educational experience of deaf students will be explored. These models create and underpin the 'complex, contested experience' described by Skelton and Valentine (2003, p.452) which forms the context of this study.

### **The medical model of disability**

Disability can be regarded in terms of an individual impairment, for example deafness, for which the provision needs to be structured around the 'diagnostic label'. This has come to be called the 'medical model of disability' (Evans and Benefield, 2001) because it follows the methodology most often used in medicine, that is, describing symptoms, making a diagnosis and suggesting a treatment aimed at a cure (Llewellyn and Hogan, 2000; Keil et al., 2006; Bridgens, 2009). In this model, the disability is seen to be associated with an individual (Smart & Smart, 2006). The individual is considered to have a condition or a deficit, for example deafness, which may mean that they can be excused from social obligations, they may be exempt from attending some classes and they may rely on other people to carry out some of their responsibilities (Pfeiffer, 2001). This model may also give medical practitioners, rather than educationalists, a key role in decision-making about the individual and the nature of the educational provision or support.

The cost to the student of the application of a medical model is that their disability is medicalised. The deaf person is seen to have a disability based entirely on the fact that they are deaf. Reiff (2004) remarks on the effects of being labelled a 'learning disabled person':

'The sad reality for many individuals is that they do not see themselves as a person first, a person who just so happens to have learning disabilities. They feel the learning disabilities define their very existence.' (Reiff, 2004, p.194)

Moreover the medical model has been adopted by parents and professionals who may regard this approach as most likely to result in resources and suitable educational provision:

'Thus a process that springs from a medical, deficit-based perspective, and that requires the assignment of somewhat arbitrary labels of 'need'. (as defined by professionals and administrators), does ultimately lead to the allocation of resources.' (Simmons and Nind, 2004, p.126)

The persistence of the language of the medical model is reflected, for example, in the new SEND Code of Practice (DfE and DoH, 2014) which requires children to undergo a coordinated assessment procedure possibly leading to an Education and Health Care Plan (EHC):

'Local authorities **must** carry out their functions with a view to identifying all the children and young people in their area who have or may have SEN or have or may have a disability.' (DfE and DoH, 2014, p.12)

The Code suggests that it is the people who 'have' SEN and who may 'have' a disability. Thus the SEND Code of Practice (DfE and DoH, 2014) uses the language of the 'medical model of disability' with an emphasis on assessment of individuals and provision which is individually determined, without recognising the different position taken by the 'social model' or indeed other possible models.

Oliver (2013) observes that 'the hegemony of special education has barely been challenged in schools.' The manner in which the Code of Practice is written might be seen to support the view that educational policy, when describing students with special educational needs, has been little influenced by the criticism of the medical model.

There is an expectation written into the SEND Code of Practice (DfE and DoH, 2014) that some teachers, such as teachers for the hearing impaired, have an expert role in providing advice for students. There is a link between the teaching and the 'impairment':

'If the child or young person is either vision or hearing impaired, or both, the educational advice and information **must** be given after consultation with a person who is qualified to teach pupils or students with these impairments.' (DfE and DoH, 2014, p. 156)

Specialist teachers of the deaf are required to have a mandatory qualification approved by the Secretary of State (DfE and DoH, 2014, p. 90).

In reality, there is a difference between what the people who drafted the guidance understood and what the students experience. This is illustrated by the findings of a majority of secondary-aged deaf students, during a large scale investigation of their views on inclusion (Jarvis, 2003). Jarvis (2003) found that students did not comment on the support offered by their teachers of the deaf, but they did refer to the support offered by their mainstream teachers. The students indicated they did not like to be singled out for support in class and preferred a more subtle approach. Some of the pupils emphasised that the help given to them should be as a result of their taking the initiative by requesting it.

This review of the literature on the medical model has illustrated that, while there has been some criticism of the medical model, especially by activists and academics, it is still influential in shaping the official language of public policy:

'The medical model of disability has been ubiquitous with the public and judiciary continually reinforcing its underlying presuppositions. In popular culture the result has been misperceptions, false stereotypes and ultimately condescension.' (Areheart, 2008, p. 732)

## **The social model of disability**

An influential document, 'Fundamental Principles of Disability' was first published by the Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation (UPIAS, 1976). The principles outlined in the document emphasised the importance of the full inclusion in society of those individuals who were described as 'disabled'. Disabled people were seen as an oppressed minority in society whose 'disability' was the result of the attitude of society towards their impairments. This theme was incorporated into the work of Abberley (1987) and Oliver (1990). The 'Social Model of Disability' provides an alternative model which has greatly influenced attitudes and responses towards disability, including deafness, over the past two decades.

The British Social Model has three key features (Shakespeare and Watson, 2010). It regards the disabled as an oppressed group, distinguishing between the impairments people may have and the 'oppression' they experience. Secondly, it understands disability to be the result of social oppression rather than something that is directly related to impairment. Thirdly, the model moves the centre of focus away from the individual with a disability and suggests that it is not the impairment, for example deafness, that leads to disability but the barriers that society erects that prevent people with impairments from taking a full and equal role in society (Oliver, 1990; Imrie, 1997). In relation to inclusion in schools, this concept has profound implications for deaf students because it suggests that it is the organisation of their school and their teachers who must change in order to accommodate them (Clark et al., 1999; Avramidis and Norwich, 2002; Connor et al., 2008).

Unlike the medical model, the social model distinguishes between impairment and disability. The fact that impairment is present is not denied but this is not seen as the cause of the disabled individual's social disadvantage. The emphasis is seen to shift from providing specific support to address the disability of an individual to discerning in what ways society, which might be represented by a school, prevents the person from fully participating in all that is on offer.

The social model of disability has greatly influenced attitudes towards disability (Shakespeare and Watson, 2010) and there have been active and often effective attempts to identify disabling barriers and to make reasonable adjustments so that people with disabilities can engage more fully in society. For example, schools are required to have an accessibility strategy (DfES, 2002) aimed at increasing the participation of the students in the curriculum and improving the physical environment, which is particularly important for deaf students who may need a sympathetic acoustic environment (Equality Act, 2010, Schedule 10). As a result of recent legislation, deaf students and their parents may expect that efforts will be made to avoid discrimination and to facilitate full access to the work and activities in classrooms.

While recognising the impact that the model has had on academics and politicians since the 1970s, some critics have argued that there are severe limitations of this model and it is questionable whether it should be used for justifying and informing an inclusive educational policy (Samaha, 2007). The first limitation is that the model is 'over-claiming' (Samaha, 2007, p. 1262); it is difficult to defend some of the strongest claims that are inherent in the model. Personal traits can be described as 'inhibiting' without always seeking a social factor. Deaf students may not respond well to suggestions that their deafness is not an important part of them as a person and only has consequences for them in social settings. Personal characteristics can be important to an individual, either on their own or in combination with environmental factors (Crow, 1996).

The second criticism is that in discussing the social model, too little attention is given to what is meant by disadvantage. In terms of deafness, there may be false inferences concerning the nature of deafness and its consequences in terms of mental capacity. There may be factors which influence the classroom experiences of deaf students that are more important than their deafness. The question becomes: 'Which disadvantage is most worthy of attention?' Isolation is an example of such a factor and reference has already been made to findings that indicate problems relating to communication and isolation (Angelides and Aravi,



2006). Deaf children are seen to have more social difficulties than their hearing peers (Batten et al., 2013).

- The third criticism is that impairment and social disadvantage are not as separate as the social model indicates and there may be a need for 'reconnection.' The two components interact and impairments are inevitably part of the social setting. Such concerns raise issues which may be addressed meaningfully only if deaf students themselves are consulted about their view of their deafness and the disadvantages they experience in the classroom' (Nunes et al., 2001).

Following a detailed analysis of the history of International Inclusive Education Policies based on the social model of disability, Peters (2007) reached the conclusion that inclusive education for the majority of individuals with disabilities may continue to be elusive if:

'future policy discourse does not remove its caveats and special conditions when it comes to the education of children and youth with disabilities.' (Peters, 2007, p.107)

A further criticism of the social model of disability is that it does not sufficiently address the actual impairment that the disabled person has (Crow, 1996). By insisting that disability is the result of discrimination – and the social model serves to reinforce this view - there is a wariness about acknowledging that individual impairments, such as deafness, are experienced by disabled people and that they may wish to have their deafness acknowledged.

'Another criticism is that the social model fails to account for the diversity of people and regards disabled people as a unitary group, whereas issues such as race, gender, sexuality and age, need to be considered alongside the disability if the complexity of everyday life is to be truly described.' (Oliver, 2013, p. 1025).

The influence of the social model has led to it becoming so important to some individuals that subjecting it to challenge is resisted. It has been argued that the whole approach could be reduced to a slogan 'disabled by

society not our bodies' (Shakespeare and Watson, 2001). However the reason the social model of disability can be said to have been so influential is that, for some disabled people, it has fundamentally altered their perception of themselves (Tregaskis, 2002) and it has enabled the subject of disability to be given a higher political profile.

Even if all the barriers to inclusion were to be effectively removed, the personal issues related to the impairment would still remain. If the social model of disability is used to explain away impairment, as if all the problems associated with impairment are socially generated, then, for those individuals with impairments, it may be that 'impairment is safer not mentioned at all' (Crow, 1996 p.58).

Suppressing the voicing of concerns about impairment may undermine an individual's ability to cope with the consequences of impairment. It is not inevitable that, by acknowledging the objective fact that an individual has impairment, this needs to be seen as a 'personal tragedy' (French and Swain, 2004).

In the light of these criticisms, it is highly instructive to find that Oliver (2013), who is often regarded as a vigorous and influential proponent of the social model, has issued a caution:

'At no point did I suggest that the individual model should be abandoned, and neither did I claim that the social model was an all-encompassing framework within which everything that happens to disabled people could be understood or explained.'  
(Oliver, 2013, p. 1024)

Oliver acknowledges that the social model of disability is criticised for two main reasons. Firstly, it appears to have no place for an acknowledgement of impairment and secondly, it presents disabled people as a 'unitary group' whereas:

'race, gender, sexuality and age mean our needs and lives are more complex' (Oliver, 2013, p.1025)

However the social model may have had two important outcomes for the disability movement. Firstly, the removal of barriers, which is at the heart of the social model, became an important part of the political debate (Sheldon et al., 2007). If people with impairments were to be included in society, then barriers needed to be dismantled. The second outcome related to disabled people themselves. Disabled people were seen to be liberated by the social model, since it implied that society carried the blame for the disability and they could take the initiative in seeking to remove the barriers to inclusion.

There is nevertheless an apparent mismatch between what the models of disability purport to explain in terms of disability and what the people who are being described might wish to contribute to the debate. What is needed is an approach that enables individuals who have a disability to redefine what their disability might mean to them in a more personal way (Reiff, 2004). Grover has further argued that there needs to be an opportunity to alter a student's experience of their disability through encouraging the student to introspect on what their disability means to them and to develop a sense of collaboration in the research (Grover, 2004).

The long running debate concerning the social model of disability is at an interesting point in its development. Oliver has suggested that if the social model, which has been in many ways beneficial to disabled people, is now being talked down by its critics, there needs to be either an attempt to reinvigorate it or it needs to be replaced by a different model (Oliver, 2013).

It has been suggested that, in response to the critical comments made about the social model of disability, a 'paradigm shift' has been taking place (Gabel and Peters, 2004). It is therefore not surprising that other models have been proposed which suggest a different approach.

## **The risk and resilience model**

One of the difficulties with the medical and social models, which specifically relates to deaf students, is that the deaf students appear relatively powerless to affect their circumstances or experience in the classroom. It is here that the concept of risk may provide a more useful explanation of the daily experience of students in school and may lead to an alternative approach. The risk may be of failure to learn or it may relate to difficulty in attempting to establish social relationships (Antia et al., 2011a). Students may respond to risk in an entirely personal way. The personal response to risk is to show greater or lesser degrees of resilience.

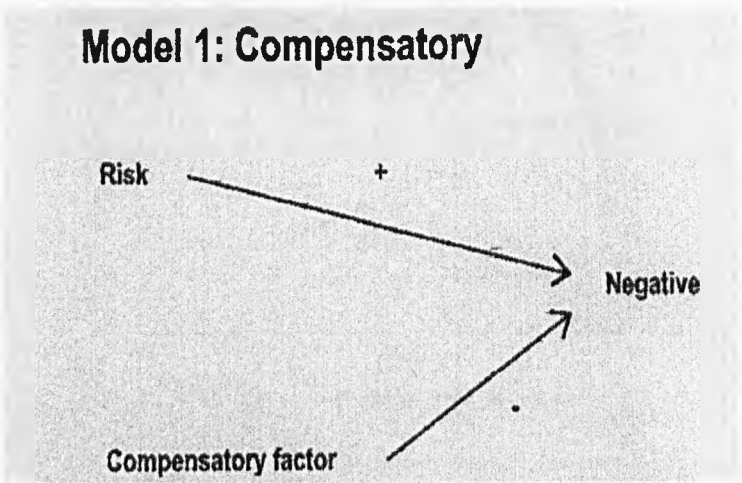
There is a considerable body of research which emphasises the relationship between exposure to risk and resilience and the importance of resilience in the development of children and young people (Gilligan, 2000; Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005; Rutter, 2006, 2012; Young et al., 2007; Gelhaar et al., 2007; Ungar, 2005).

The role that resilience may play in the life of adolescents has been investigated by Fergus and Zimmermann (2005) for whom the concept of resilience refers to the process of overcoming the negative effects of risk exposure, coping successfully with traumatic experiences and avoiding the negative outcomes associated with the risk. They argue that a key requirement of resilience is the presence of both risks and 'promotive factors' that either help bring about a positive outcome or will reduce or avoid a negative outcome. The approach focuses on understanding healthy development in the light of exposure to risk. They argue that the promotive factors that can help avoid a negative outcome from exposure to risk are either internal, such as competence, coping skills or self-efficacy or external, such as parental support, adult mentoring or association with community organisations that promote adolescent development.

Fergus and Zimmerman (2005) discuss three models of resilience, the compensatory, protective and challenge models, that seek to explain how

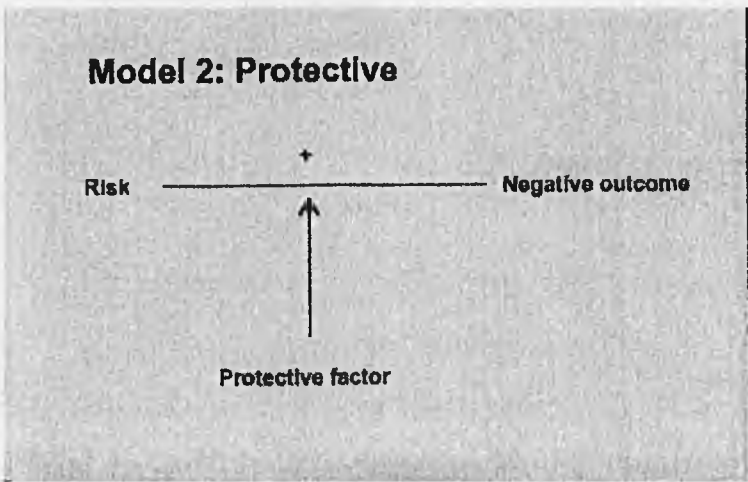
promotive factors operate to avoid risk resulting in a negative outcome. The models are illustrated by the following six diagrams. The commentary which follows relates these six diagrams to the three models of resilience.

Model 1 illustrates a 'compensatory' model. The compensatory factor is seen to have a direct effect on the outcome. For example, adult monitoring of behaviour may help to avoid a negative outcome as a result of risk.



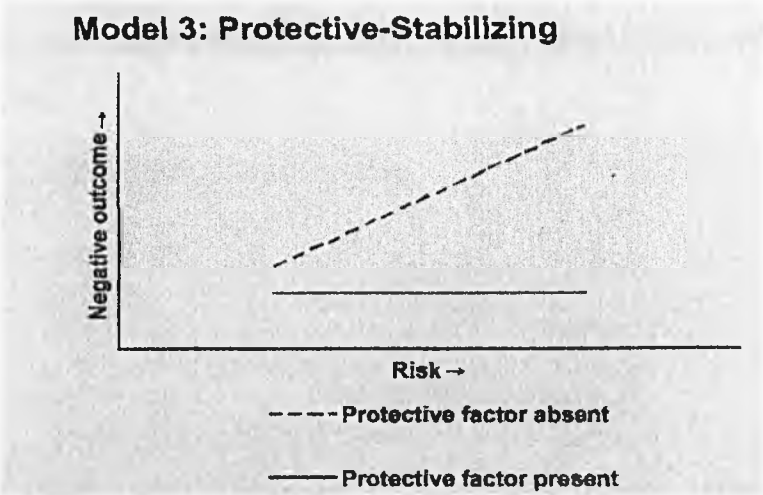
**Figure 3: Model 1 – a Compensatory Model**  
(Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005, p.402)

The following three models all illustrate different interpretations of the 'protective model'. Model 2 illustrates a 'protective' model where, for example, a high level of parental support, the protective factor, may avoid a negative outcome.



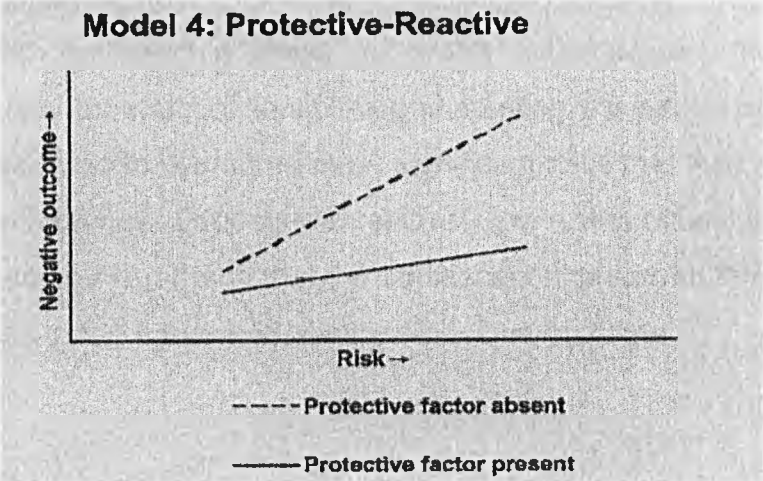
**Figure 4: Model 2 – a Protective Model, illustrating the effect of a protective factor** (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005, p.402)

Model 3 is a protective model which shows the effect of a protective factor, parental support, being present and a protective factor being absent. The protective factor is seen to neutralize the effect of risk. There is no relationship between the risk and the outcome when the protective factor is present, but in its absence, there is a higher risk of a negative outcome.



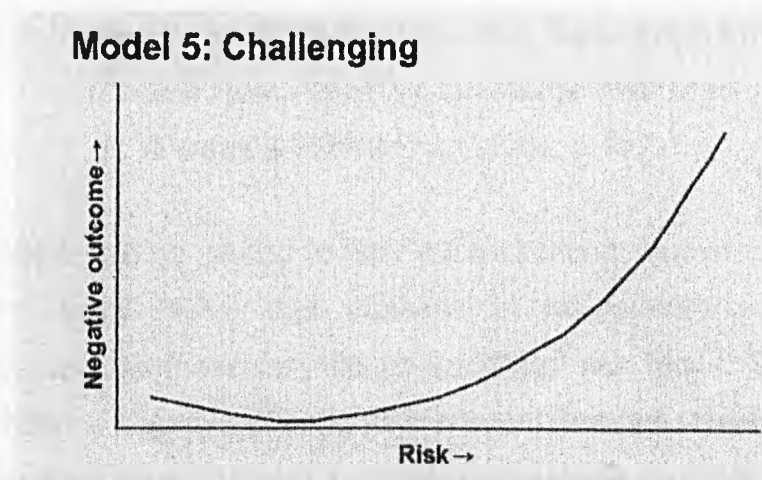
**Figure 5: Model 3 – a Protective Model, illustrating the effect of the absence and presence of the protective factor (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005, p.402)**

In Model 4, which illustrates a protective model, it can be seen that the protective factor is lowering the risk of a negative outcome, as shown by the slope of the graph, but it is not entirely removing it.



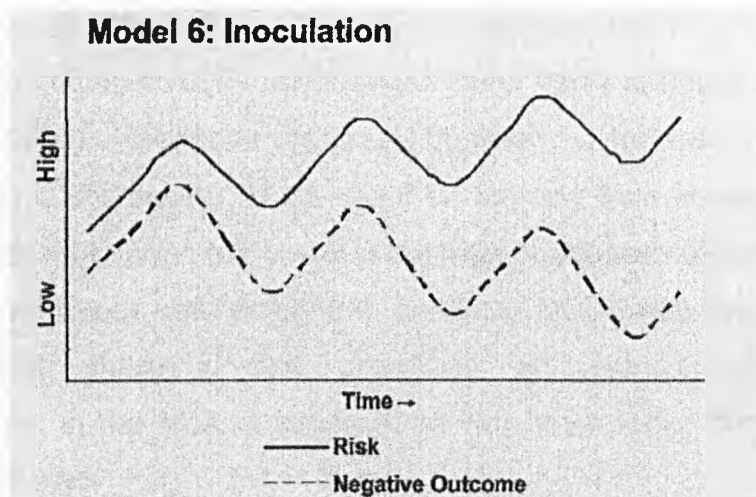
**Figure 6: Model 4 – a Protective-Reactive Model, illustrating that the protective factor lowers the risk (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005, p.402)**

Model 5 illustrates a challenge model where the relationship between risk and outcome is 'curvilinear.' This illustrates that exposure to low levels of risk or high levels of risk may result in negative outcomes but moderate levels of risk are associated with positive outcomes. The notion is that adolescents who are exposed to moderate levels of risk learn how to overcome them; they practise skills and learn to employ resources. This learning does not take place if there is too low a level of risk or if there is too much risk.



**Figure 7: Model 5 – a Challenging Model, illustrating the curvilinear effect of low risk and high risk**  
(Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005, p.402)

Model 6 demonstrates the 'challenge' model. It can be seen that repeated challenge has the effect of 'inoculating or steeling' the adolescent so that they are prepared to overcome more significant risks that they may confront in the future. Exposure to relatively low levels of risk with a positive outcome can mean that the adolescent is prepared to face greater risks in the future and ensure a positive outcome.



**Figure 8: Model 6 – an Inoculation Model, illustrating the positive outcome from repeated challenge over time**  
(Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005, p.402)

These models can be related to deaf adolescents in mainstream schools. There are many 'risks' that students in mainstream schools may experience and deafness may be an additional risk factor. The effect of risk may have a negative effect on the student, but not necessarily, and it is possible that deaf students become increasingly resilient because of their classroom experiences.

The concepts of risk and resilience require further consideration because of their relevance to the current study. The two concepts have been linked to result in a model of disability known as the Risk and Resilience model. The 'Risk and Resilience' framework (Wong, 2003; Reiff, 2004) makes allowances for individual differences in people with disability and encourages the identification of factors that may lead to either positive outcomes or negative outcomes.

Resilience is not understood, in reference to the model, as an attribute that some people have and some do not. Resilience is better seen in terms of a process which is interactive with environmental factors (Rutter, 2012). Resilience is not measurable but its presence can be inferred from the way in which people react to risk in their environment. It is important to understand that the reaction of people to risk may not be the same, even if the risk factors appear to be the same.



It has been observed that research into educational progress is often focused on finding out why children are doing badly at home or at school (Gilligan, 2000). Resilience research, however, is focused on strengths rather than weaknesses. More might be learned from investigating why some children are seen to do well in the face of adverse circumstances. In adopting resilience as a central concept in investigating a child's development, there is the possibility of understanding healthy development in the face of exposure to risk in everyday life. A resilient child is one who:

'bounces back having endured adversity, who continues to function reasonably well despite continued exposure to risk.'

(Gilligan, 2000, p.37)

### **Resilience and deaf students**

In his exploration of deafness, Jacobs (2010) used the investigations of Reiff (2004) and Wong (2003), which relate to the risk and resilience model. He was interested in the attributes and tactics deaf individuals employ to maximize their 'psychosocial potential.' Taking such an approach to investigating the experiences of deaf students in mainstream classrooms has the potential for capturing their personal and perhaps unique contribution to their educational progress, which is what the current research question is seeking to achieve.

Jacobs (2010) sought an alternative approach to his investigations of deaf adults. As part of his search for alternative approaches, he noted that most investigations into deaf people were unsatisfactory for his purpose. He found there were four general topics that were often investigated in relation to people who are deaf. Two areas of research were related to the medical model and focused on language competencies and the use of technology to overcome barriers. There were two further areas of research that were related to the social model, in particular an interest in cultural deafness and research on the significance of seeing deafness in terms of linguistic minority rather than as a disability.

None of the research methodologies focused specifically on how deaf people maximize their psychosocial potential. Jacobs (2010) also supports the view that there has been a paradigm shift towards the risk and resilience model, which does not concern itself with disability as pathology or how barriers erected by society may influence the life of people with disabilities. Rather it focuses on how individuals respond to the risks they encounter on a daily basis and how they enhance their psychosocial development.

The risk and resilience model has been applied to the investigation of deaf children:

'Deaf children have long been considered a population at risk for difficulties in developing social competence because of the negative effects of hearing loss on language and communication development.' (Antia et al., 2011b, p.139)

Mainstream classrooms may present deaf students with a number of challenges that may put them at risk. The risks may be related to problems of communication, academic challenge or social relationships. It is the students' responses to the risks that provide a perspective within which the research question might be investigated.

The NDCS commissioned an investigation on Resilience and Deaf Children (Young et al., 2008). Young et al. defined resilience as:

'the factors, processes and mechanisms which, in the face of significant risk/trauma/adversity/stress/disadvantage, nonetheless work to enable an individual, family or community to thrive and be successful.' (Young et al., 2008, p 42)

After a systematic review and analysis of the literature, it became clear to Young and her colleagues that there was very little published work relating specifically to deaf children and resilience. However the investigators concluded that the concept of resilience offered a positive response to adversity or disadvantage that some children experience.

Seeking to understand the classroom experience of deaf students through talking to them or seeking their opinion directly might provide insights into the extent to which resilience may be an important factor in their daily life:

'What it might be to be *resilient and deaf* remains inadequately understood, yet has the potential to be directional in the development of new resources for professionals working to support the optimum development of deaf young people's potential and preferred ways of being.' (Young et al., 2008, p.52)

### **The voice of the child**

Following Young's suggestion, the current study is centred on asking deaf children directly to talk about their personal experience, an approach has become more common in the past 20 years:

'Allowing children to be active participants in the research process enhances their status as individuals with inherent rights to participation in society more generally and the right to be heard in their authentic voice'. (Grover, 2004, p.90)

The approach may be referred to as 'the voice of the child' or 'pupil voice.' Other ways in which the general approach might be described are 'the right to be heard', 'the right to participate' and the 'right to be consulted'. It has been argued (Lundy, 2007) that these are abbreviations which have their origin in the Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and might not quite capture all that is intended in the original wording:

'1. Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.

2. For this purpose, the child shall in particular be provided with the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly, or through a

representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law.’ (UNCRC, 1989, Article 12)

A complication is that such consultations are dependent on the cooperation of adults and their commitment to such a process. Such adults may have various concerns:

‘scepticism about children’s capacity (or a belief that they lack capacity) to have a meaningful input into decision making; a worry that giving children more control will undermine authority and destabilise the school environment; and finally, concern that compliance will require too much effort which would be better spent on education itself.’ (Lundy, 2007 pp. 929-930)

There is also the possibility that the debate is not actually centred on the competency of the child to participate but rather the extent to which adults are prepared to listen to children on matters they may affect them (Leeson, 2007). Children should be treated as people in their own right since not to do so means:

‘the child is rendered powerless, dehumanized and marginalized, lacking resilience to face all manner of social and emotional challenges.’ (John, 2003, p. 22-23 cited in Leeson, 2007, p.275)

In the past, research focused ‘on’ children rather than ‘with’ children or ‘for’ children (Fargas-Malet et al, 2010 p. 174). Fargas-Malet et al. (2010) reported that children were seen as incompetent and unreliable and therefore not regarded as able to participate directly in research. It is now far more usual for children to participate actively in research (Grover, 2004). However, it should be noted that, while there is an emphasis on listening to the voice of the child in research and in legislation, this is not always current practice and children may not be consulted routinely on issues that affect them (Harding and Atkinson, 2009). However, listening to the ‘voice of the child’ is not a simple matter. It is constrained by ethical

considerations (Alderson, 1995) and is the subject of theoretical considerations of what is meant by 'voice'.

At a theoretical level, the concept of 'voice' can be conceptualised in different ways (Komulainen, 2007). Voice may be seen as an individual property, in which case one assumes that when listening to a child's voice, what is being heard is a representation of 'mind' where the 'mind' is:

'the site, origin and definition of purposive human action.'  
(Komulainen, 2007, p.23)

An alternative theoretical stance is that 'meanings' only exist when two or more voices come into contact. There has to be a speaker and a listener. Noyes (2005) observes that 'voices are nothing without hearers' (Noyes, 2005, p.536). This observation begs the question of who are the 'hearers' and what is their relationship to the 'speakers.' Unequal power relationships exist in society between adults and children (Kirk, 2007) and these are replicated when conducting research relating to those who are 'voicing' and those who are 'listening'. This was a consideration in the current study, taking into account the power relationship between myself as an older researcher and the adolescent students.

Employing the concept of 'the voice of the child', gives rise to the possibility that the voice of the child may be significantly different from the voice of an adult. This is addressed by Punch (2002) who observes:

'It is somewhat paradoxical that within the new sociology of childhood many of those who call for the use of innovative or adapted research techniques with children, are also those who emphasize the competence of children. If children are competent social actors, why are special 'child-friendly' methods needed to communicate with them?' (Punch, 2002 p.321)

In many of the interactions that deaf students have in their classrooms, their parents or teachers are present and their very presence may be a complicating factor (Grover, 2004) when it is the 'authentic' voice of the

child that is being sought, as in the current study. If the only views that are allowed are those that do not transgress what is normally expected, there is some doubt that what is voiced is really a reflection of the everyday reality of those who are voicing. The voice of the child approach is subject to the criticism that children's perspectives can only represent moments in time and can be rather fluid (Warming, 2011). Another criticism is that first-hand accounts are usually obtained orally and this gives a possible advantage to children who are more verbally able. A third criticism addresses the imbalance of power between the person who is voicing and the hearer. However it is Warming's contention that,

'the use of methodological concepts such as 'listening', 'giving voice to', 'research with', 'participative research' and 'child-led research' in order to investigate, access and represent children's perspectives remain central aims in the field of childhood research,' (Warming, 2011, p.39)

### **Students' perspectives on research**

An attempt has been made (Hill, 2006) to find information on how children themselves understand research and what they would prefer to happen to them if they participate in research. After a concerted effort to find investigations on children's understanding of research and research procedures, Hill (2006) concluded that there are virtually none. He and his colleagues undertook a study, commissioned by the Scottish Parliament, to review the best ways of obtaining children's perspectives when engaged in research. They concluded that what children and young people want from research is not very different from what adults want from research. They found that children preferred methods which they perceived as 'more fun and taking up less of their time' (Hill, 2006, p.84). They recognised the importance of fairness of access and representation and they showed some sympathy towards those young people who had not been chosen to participate. They recognised issues such as shyness which might prevent young people from saying what they really thought and they were aware of the importance of privacy.

## **Deaf students' views on inclusion in mainstream schools**

There have been relatively few attempts to ascertain directly the views of deaf students in mainstream schools. Research undertaken in Cyprus (Angelides and Aravi, 2006), referred to above, was conducted on students who had left school, making it a retrospective study and many of the interviews were conducted through a sign language interpreter.

The most recent and extensive attempt to approach deaf students directly and seek their views on inclusion was a research project commissioned by the RNID to which reference was made in Chapter 1 (RNID, 2002). The investigation involved a total of 83 participants. Of the participants, 61 were deaf and 22 were hearing. Of the 61 children who were deaf, 27 chose to sign and 34 preferred to communicate orally.

The authors suggested that self-advocacy was playing an increasingly important role in education today and the voice of the pupil was being heard in a range of contexts (RNID, 2002). The investigators set out with the proposition that the students involved were experts in providing information about their own classroom experiences and that therefore the data they collected provided a useful insight into key issues which arise when deaf pupils are included in mainstream settings. The current study also began from this premise.

The aims of the 2002 project were

- to document and disseminate deaf pupils' experiences of inclusion
- to identify barriers and factors facilitating the effective inclusion of deaf pupils into mainstream schools.' (RNID., 2002, p.18)

The second of these aims, in using the words 'identify barriers' is suggestive of a 'social model' approach, although this was not explicitly recognised by the authors.

The authors found evidence that deaf students were keen and ready to discuss their relationships with their peers. They observed the enthusiasm

with which the pupils they interviewed were willing to share their views. However, they noted that few studies had been carried out on the social integration of deaf children.

The importance of friendship and social integration was the focus of a later study in the Netherlands (Wauters & Knoors, 2008), where fewer deaf children are educated in mainstream schools than in the UK. 18 deaf children and 344 of their peers were asked to complete sociometric tasks, peer ratings and peer nomination to measure peer acceptance, social competence and friendship relations. The results provided:

'a positive image of the social integration of this group of deaf children in inclusive settings. Deaf and hearing children are found to be similar in their peer acceptance, social status, and friendship relations.' (Wauters and Knoors, 2008, p.35)

However, the study also comments on the nature of the involvement with peers:

'However, deaf children seem to be more often involved in a network without any friendships (network without friendship or antipathy and antipathy-only network) than their hearing peers.' (Wauters and Knoors, 2008, p.33)

The deaf children were found to have lower scores on behaviour which is concerned with feelings of empathy and concern for others and higher scores on socially withdrawn behaviour, caused by more nominations on 'seeks help' and is 'bullied.'

Following the 2002 study, the RNID commissioned further work with deaf students 'Learning from Success: High Achieving Deaf Students' (Powers, 2011).

Powers' research had two main aims:

1. To raise expectations by highlighting the potential and achievement of deaf pupils.



2.To learn from the perspectives and experiences of high achieving deaf pupils, their families and teachers to improve the quality of provision for all deaf children. (Powers, S., 2011, p.1)

Powers contacted all advisory services in England, mainstream secondary schools with resource bases for deaf children and special schools for secondary aged deaf children and invited them to nominate any severely or profoundly deaf young person between the ages of 14 and 18, who was thought to be a high achiever. The criteria for nomination included success in language communication and literacy; success in academic work; social success; participation in extracurricular activities; personal qualities of confidence and independence; success in sport; and having overcome personal difficulties.

27 of the students nominated were interviewed, as well as their parents, teachers of the deaf and, in some cases, other professionals. In total 111 interviews were conducted. Some were conducted by a signing deaf interviewer. Of the 27 students interviewed in the first phase of the project, five were selected and case studies were conducted to investigate the perceived reasons for success.

In the light of the research referred to in this literature review, the method of selection of students may be seen to be questionable. The students were nominated by adults, in particular teachers of the deaf, who knew them well. The criterion used, that is 'high achieving deaf students,' limits the scope of the investigation and raises the question as to how far the findings can be generalised in terms of the experiences of the majority of deaf children in mainstream schools. The voice of the student was not given the prominence that the current investigation has made a defining feature, given that student interviews represented only approximately one quarter of the interviews conducted.

## **Summary**

This review has provided insight into the issues relating to the experiences of deaf students in mainstream classrooms with regard to their academic progress and the social relationships they are able to form

within their school with their teachers and their peers. There is support in the literature for seeking the views of the participants directly, rather than indirectly seeking the views of significant adults.

The review has also highlighted the fact that there are few studies which have focussed on seeking greater understanding of deaf children and their educational needs. Two of the authors cited in this review make this explicit:

'In many countries, inclusion of children with disabilities, including deaf children, is a core element of educational policy. If possible, deaf children are educated in mainstream settings. Given this policy, it is surprising to see how few studies have been carried out into the social integration of deaf children.'  
(Wauters and Knoors, 2008, p.21)

'The rapid realisation that there was very little published work on that subject led us to consider more broadly the industry of resilience research.' (Young et al., 2008, p.41)

This lack of research evidence and the fact that the last major investigation of what children in mainstream schools think about their experiences in mainstream schools in the UK was carried out 12 years ago (RNID, 2002; Iantaffi et al.; 2003; Jarvis, 2003 ) leads to the conclusion that what is attempted in the current research represents a worthwhile enterprise.

Another consideration is that the social model of disability which has been so influential in determining where deaf children are educated is being questioned (Oliver 2013) and the investigation of an alternative model is justified.

Finally, the investigation centres on the concerns of the deaf students themselves. The Risk and Resilience model may provide insight into the extent to which deaf students contribute to their own educational progress.

Having considered the research literature, there are three research questions which I wish to pursue in the current study:

1. When deaf students talk about their classroom experiences, what do they believe to be the important issues?
2. How do deaf students respond to the support that they experience in mainstream schools?
3. How far can deaf students participate in and shape their school experience?

## **CHAPTER 3      Methodology**

### **The context of the study**

My aim in this study was to investigate, analyse and seek to understand the participants' classroom experiences by listening and recording their own words. The literature review showed me that the 'voice of the child' approach (Grover, 2004; Lundy, 2007; Fargas-Malet et al., 2010) results in valuable evidence from which to increase understanding of the experience of deaf students in the classroom. Such an approach may indicate the important issues, as seen from the students' perspective, it may reveal their views on the support they are receiving and it may provide insights into the contribution they are making to their own learning. Following from my review of the relevant literature, I resolved that this investigation would be based on listening directly to the 'voice' (Grover 2004) of the participants as they described their personal experiences of their day-to-day life in the classroom.

Prior to my registration for the EdD, I had worked on a part time basis in a national centre for the assessments of deaf students. The students attending the centre were self-referred and they came from all regions of the United Kingdom, including Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The assessment involved an audiologist, a speech and language therapist and an educational psychologist, the role I performed. The students and their parents were present in the centre for the whole day. At the end of the day, there was a plenary session involving the professionals who had contributed to the assessment, the parents and the students. In the seven years I was involved with the centre, I assessed and engaged in dialogue with over 200 deaf students. I therefore recognised the potential in listening to the voice of the students themselves as they described their experiences.

My experience at the assessment centre led me to speculate that deaf students in mainstream classrooms had a number of issues, some of which they had in common, which they were able and willing to articulate if given an opportunity in a sensitive and receptive environment. It was

this background that motivated me to embark on an in-depth investigation of the classroom experience of deaf children.

It is important to note that the students who were referred to the assessment centre were not, in the main, perceived by their parents to be in a failing situation as far as their schooling was concerned, but there were educational issues to be addressed. Following the assessment, the majority of the students returned to their schools with a detailed professional report including the findings from the assessment and recommendations of what changes, if any, might be considered by the staff in their school. It is also important to note that most of the referrals were financed by a trust fund. The students who were seen were thus not filtered by financial considerations and they therefore represented a wide cross-section of the population of deaf children of school age.

### **Research design and implementation**

There are two methodological approaches that might be considered relevant to my chosen investigation, namely a quantitative approach or a qualitative approach. Quantitative research can be defined as research:

‘that explains phenomena according to numerical data which are analysed by means of mathematically based methods, especially statistics’ (Yilmaz, 2013 p. 311).

Qualitative research has been defined as:

‘an emergent inductive and naturalistic approach to the study of people, cases, phenomena, social situations and processes in their natural settings in order to reveal in descriptive terms the meanings that people attach to their experience of the world’ (Yilmaz, 2013, p.312).

A distinguishing feature in the use of the two methodologies is the difference in the goals that the researchers set out to reach. Most quantitative research is aimed at finding causal mechanisms based on the assumption that social facts have an objective reality, whereas qualitative research emphasises subjective experience and regards reality as a

social construction (Trafimow, 2014). Quantitative research begins with a hypothesis in contrast to qualitative research which ends with a hypothesis or a grounded theory. The researcher is expected to be detached and impartial in quantitative research, whereas in qualitative research, the researcher is expected to be personally involved and to develop an empathetic understanding of the participants (Glesne and Peshkin, 1992). The results of quantitative research are assumed to be generalizable and context free, whereas the results of qualitative research are dependent on time and context. In conducting quantitative research, the researcher is taking an "outsider" view. The qualitative researcher is expected to take an "insider's" view (Glesne and Peshkin, 1992, adapted in Yilmaz, 2013).

Based on these definitions, a qualitative approach was a better fit for addressing my research question than a quantitative approach. Research has shown the population of deaf children to be remarkably diverse (Oliver 2013) and it would be difficult to find a representative sample of the deaf population. It would therefore be potentially misleading to draw conclusions about deaf individuals from quantitative approaches, which attempted to find a representative sample. Furthermore, the population of deaf adolescents in mainstream schools is relatively small and it would be challenging to recruit a representative sample of students to engage in quantitative research.

Rather than start with a hypothesis, the approach enabled me to listen to the students, record their experiences and their insights and to allow the data to determine the outcomes. While a possible disadvantage of adopting a qualitative methodology is that the findings cannot be generalised across the entire population of deaf children, it is clearly difficult to do so in any event since the population is so diverse.

My methodology was intended to describe how deaf students in mainstream classrooms make sense of the world. Therefore I needed to allow student views to emerge without 'predetermining those standpoints' (Yilmaz 2013, p.313). Qualitative research methodology is usually focused on a small sample of participants, the study of which might create a large

amount of detailed information leading, through analysis, to 'an in-depth study of their lives' (Yilmaz 2013 p. 313). This approach describes my own intentions in this study.

### **The participants**

Although the deaf students that I had assessed in the course of my work were all of school age (5-19), I decided to recruit only students of secondary age to assist in the investigation. There were four reasons for this decision:

- The participants would all have been engaged in mainstream education for at least 6 years which would have given them a wide range of classroom experience.
- The participants, as secondary aged students, were more likely to be able to articulate their thoughts through spoken language.
- Prior to my training as an educational psychologist, I had taught science in a comprehensive school for twelve years, which had given me first-hand experience of life in the secondary mainstream classroom from a teacher's perspective and I had developed skills in entering into dialogue with students of this age.
- The relevant RNID study provided an exemplar for my own investigation and this had been centred on pupils of secondary school age.

### **Previous research**

I searched the available literature for any previous investigations which related to my research question. As my review of the literature demonstrates, there were few substantial investigations which sought to listen directly to the voice of deaf students about their experiences in school. One particularly relevant investigation, referred to in Chapter 2, took place in 2002. The 2002 investigation resulted in two research papers (Iantaffi et al., 2003; Jarvis, 2003) and a book (RNID 2002). The eventual direction of my own investigation was to some extent influenced

by this research. By adopting a similar methodology, there were advantages in drawing comparisons between the findings in 2002 and my findings in 2014.

My research questions are:

1. When deaf students talk about their classroom experiences, what do they believe to be the important issues?
2. How do deaf students respond to the support that they experience in mainstream schools?
3. How far can deaf students participate in and shape their school experience?

The aims of the 2002 research were:

1. To document and disseminate deaf pupils' experiences of inclusion.
2. To identify barriers and factors facilitating the effective inclusion of deaf pupils into mainstream schools. (RNID, 2002, p.18)

A major difference between my research question and the research question addressed in 2002 was the theoretical framework implied by the use of the term 'inclusion.' The research question in 2002 focussed on the experience of the deaf students with respect to 'inclusion.' The title might be seen to suggest that deaf students are in some way different from hearing students and are therefore 'included' in their schools in a way that hearing students are not. It is questionable whether the students involved saw themselves as 'included' and they would not have had any experience of not being included with which to make any comparison. My research was focussed on the personal experience of the students in the day-to-day classroom and I carefully avoided the use of technical terminology, such as 'inclusion', when interacting with the students. The language the students used to describe themselves and their experience was given priority.

The authors of the 2002 research note that:



'Now is a good time for a new study to be undertaken to identify deaf pupils' perceptions of inclusion.' (RNID, 2002, p.15)

The research question would therefore seem particularly appropriate in the light of this comment, made twelve years ago, as the views of deaf students in relation to their classroom experience is the focus of this investigation and it is perhaps 'a good time for a new study'.

The importance of engaging with this previous research when conducting my own investigation was immediately apparent in the first sentence of the Forward to the 2002 study:

'This research is different, because it puts the views of young people centre stage.' (RNID, 2002, p.1)

The authors noted that, at the time of the investigation, few attempts had been made to find out directly from deaf students, as recipients of policies and provision, what they themselves thought they needed to make good progress in school. The authors noted that children's experience of the classroom may be significantly different from what the adults involved might assume them to be (RNID, 2002) and this consideration is equally pertinent in my investigation.

The methodology described in the 2002 research involves two methods of data collection - one-to-one interviews and focus group discussions. The one-to-one interviews were conducted with deaf students, whereas both deaf and hearing pupils were involved in focus groups. The researchers conducted one to one interviews with 34 students who were oral and deaf from a total of 83 participants.

There are clear parallels between the two investigations. From the point of view of methodology, an important similarity between the two investigations is the fact that only secondary aged students were included in the investigations. As referred to above, the reasons are that pupils at the secondary stage would have substantial experience of mainstream placement and have experiences and insights to report. They would also be more likely to have sufficient maturity to articulate their thoughts during

dialogue. (RNID, 2002) Both investigations are built on the premise that the views of the students themselves will provide valuable insight into classroom experience.

### **The design of the investigation**

Having established that my methodology was to be based on one-to-one interviews with the participants, I constructed a design with the intention of maximising the contribution of the participants and minimising my own input and that of parents and teachers.

As part of my design, I proposed that the interviews should be preceded by a round table discussion with the participants and their families, partly to give information about my aims for ethical reasons, but also to put the participants at their ease. The parents and students were reminded of the information which they had received in advance and were able to ask any additional questions. Confidentiality was assured and students understood that the substance of the interviews would not be shared with their schools or their parents.

Porter (2009) draws attention to the linguistic demands of interviews. She notes that, for most children, being interviewed is an unusual experience and within each interview, questions may be repeated or presented with different emphasis. She suggests that 'open questions' are more likely to bring about more accurate information. She also notes that young people with learning difficulties are more likely to say they like something than that they dislike something. Porter emphasises the cognitive demands of being interviewed, particularly on memory; since children are not usually interviewed about events as they happen, there may be problems with accurate recall.

In the 2002 investigation, in order to put the participants at their ease, the researchers started with questions which were more structured and therefore placed no great demand on the part of the participants to provide an answer. Examples of the questions were 'What is your favourite subject? Why do you like it? And how is it taught?' (RNID, 2002, p.23-24). These questions were deliberately designed to elicit responses

relating to academic inclusion. In my opinion, this did not meet the requirement for the researcher not to influence the course of the interview. The outcome of the interviews should arise from the data and not be anticipated by the form of the questions asked. In a similar way, large rag dolls were introduced to stimulate answers to questions relating to social inclusion. Given the age group of the students involved, this may be seen as an unnecessary complication and there is no evidence that the students needed such stimulus material.

However, given that it is important to ease the participants into the interview, I decided to use an adaptation of a 'critical incident' approach.

### **A 'critical Incident' approach**

To encourage the students to begin to talk freely about their classroom experience, I piloted a 'critical incident' approach, based on the work of Flanagan (1954). He states:

'Critical incident technique consists of a set of procedures for collecting direct observations of human behaviour in such a way as to facilitate their potential usefulness in solving practical problems and developing broad psychological principles'.  
(Flanagan, 1954, p. 327)

Flanagan defines a 'critical incident' as follows:

'By an incident is meant any observable human activity that is sufficiently complete in itself to permit inferences and predictions to be made about the person performing the act. To be critical, an incident must occur in the situation where the purpose or intent of the act seems fairly clear to the observer and where its consequences are sufficiently definite to leave little doubt concerning its effects.'(Flanagan, 1954, p. 327)

Flanagan gives examples of questions that would help the participants to remember critical incidents. I adapted these questions for use with the students in relation to their classroom experience. Thus, at the beginning

of the interviews, the students were asked to reflect on the following four questions:

- 1) Think of a time when something happened to you in class that you felt should be encouraged because it seemed, in your opinion, to be an example of what should happen in classrooms to help you learn.
- 2) Think of a time in class when something happened to you that you felt should not happen because it seemed, in your opinion, to be an example of what should not happen in classrooms because it prevented you from learning.
- 3) Think of a time when something happened to you in class that helped you to communicate well with others or helped you to understand what others were saying to you.
- 4) Think of a time in class when something happened that made it difficult for you to communicate with others or when you did not understand what others were saying to you.

The responses to these questions were recorded on the transcripts (Appendix 1). The questions encouraged the students to consider their learning in the classroom and reflect on their experience. The value of the critical incident approach was to suggest to the participants that it was their own specific experience that was being asked for rather than opinions, hunches and estimates.

The students were invited to contribute to the dialogue freely and as they wished, following the introductory questions. Prompts and encouragement were given by me as necessary. There was a crib sheet (Appendix 8) consisting of the four questions and suggestions of broad topics that the student might wish to discuss. No particular order was given and there was no specific request to respond only to issues that were on the sheet.

The interviews were recorded on to a laptop computer with high quality recording software installed. The microphone was a small unobtrusive lapel microphone which, once fitted, could be ignored.

## **The pilot study**

In order to pilot my research design as described above, I recruited three deaf students from a special school for the deaf. These three students had recently transferred from their secondary comprehensive schools into the sixth form of the special school. The students were selected because they had recently transferred from different comprehensive schools, they had extensive experience of mainstream schools and they had been academically successful in a mainstream setting in terms of their GCSE examinations. The students knew each other but they were not particular friends. It was intended that, being sufficiently articulate, they would provide insight into practical issues that might need to be taken into account when carrying out the main investigation and make comments on how my design might be improved. To this extent they acted as a focus group. It is of interest that the focus groups in the 2002 investigation were made up of a combination of both deaf and hearing students whereas the one-to-one interviews were conducted only with deaf students (RNID, 2002, p.23).

The first session was a group session in which the purpose of the investigation was explained and initial responses were elicited. This session took the place of the intended round table discussions including the parents which were to be conducted in the main investigation.

From the outset, no interaction with the participants was considered or enacted without a careful consideration of the ethics of such an interaction. Two ethical guidelines were consulted. The British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2011) and the Code of Ethics and Conduct published by the Ethics Committee of the British Psychological Society (2009). Three overarching principles determined how the participants were involved, namely informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality and protection from harm (Ritchie et al., 2003). These principles are alluded to, where appropriate, in the account of the investigation.

Obtaining the informed consent of the participants and their parents was an important part of the pilot study. I explained to the students that I was

undertaking a pilot study and the focus would be on the experience of the students in their mainstream classrooms. The students were encouraged to ask questions about their involvement and then, if they were still sure they wanted to participate, to sign a form giving their permission. A letter was sent to each set of parents explaining precisely what the investigation was about and seeking their written permission for their child to participate (Cameron and Murphy, 2007).

The second session of the pilot study took the form of individual interviews which were recorded. All the students spoke fluently and provided detailed and relevant information about their experiences in mainstream classrooms. A third session again took the form of an individual interview and was intended to give the participants, having had time to reflect further on the first interview, an opportunity to add to their previous responses. In the event, it was found that the second individual interview resulted in little new insight and was mainly a rather stilted repeat of the first interview.

A second purpose of the pilot study was to investigate the practicalities of interviewing students and recording what they say in a way that could be subject to future analysis and conversion into data. All of the interviews were recorded with high quality audio recording equipment. As an additional back-up, a high quality hand-held digital recorder remained switched on throughout the interviews. This was particularly important since some of the speech patterns of the students, if they were indistinct, might have impeded the transcription. The recordings were transcribed in full. Pauses, emotional responses, emphases and hesitations were all included in the transcripts as they might add substantially to an understanding of the meaning the student was attempting to convey.

The transcripts from the pilot study were not included in the main study and its analysis, although issues raised by students in the main study were identical to some of those raised in the pilot study. However, where appropriate, quotations have been included from the three pilot study students, identified as Xavier, Yusuf and Zena.

## **Reflections on the pilot study.**

The pilot study provided evidence that the research design was appropriate to the task. The critical incident approach had fulfilled the aim of putting the students at their ease and encouraging them to contribute across a range of issues relating to their experiences in the classroom, both positive and negative.

The pilot study also provided evidence that a less structured interview framework than that used in the 2002 investigation was justified and would be likely to enable students to talk freely. Without explicit prompting, the participants contributed their views on their experience of being a deaf student in a mainstream setting from an academic and a social perspective. The pilot study established that, for the group of students involved, there was sufficient time for them to contribute much of what they had to say during a single one-to-one interview. The second opportunity to contribute did not elicit extra information or insights and put the participants under unnecessary pressure to respond. This was an important outcome from the pilot study. If the students were able to contribute fluently and in detail during one interview then this avoided the possible deterioration of their responses that might have been perceived during a second round of interviews. Such a deterioration might be the result of fatigue or simply because the students were left with little more to add. There are also ethical issues relating to the emotional welfare of the participants who, during the pilot study, reported feeling unable to add to what they had already contributed and indicating they felt somewhat frustrated at being asked to contribute more.

Immediately following the interviews, the recordings were transcribed. The three transcripts provided a wealth of useful data relating to the experiences of the students in mainstream schools. A preliminary analysis was possible and themes which were common to the scripts could be identified using a Grounded Theory approach (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Bryant and Charmaz, 2010). Grounded theory is a research methodology where the idea is to develop a set of concepts that can provide a theoretical explanation of a social phenomenon (Kennedy and Lingard,

2006). It is known as 'grounded theory' because the theories generated are 'grounded' on the data that is collected (Suddaby, 2006) and not identified in advance.

The transcripts from the pilot study were not analysed with the same rigour as were the transcripts from the main investigation but their scrutiny did provide an opportunity to consider ways in which the full potential of such transcripts might be realised.

### **Recruiting the participants**

One major issue, which in fact turned out to be even more difficult than might have been anticipated, was identifying a suitable group of students and then recruiting them as participants in the investigation. This difficulty significantly delayed the process of data collection and delayed my original time table. There are 12,472 secondary aged deaf students in England, 34% of the total number of deaf students (NDCS, 2013a). Of the students who were potential participants, the majority were the only deaf student in their school. I recognised that recruiting through schools was potentially easier than recruiting more directly with families. The reason I did not take what was possibly a more straightforward route was that I thought it essential to avoid any possibility that the adults associated with the student's school might, however inadvertently, influence what the student had to contribute. There is a question of the power relationship between students and their teachers (Kirk, 2007). I am aware that the traditional view of the teacher as the primary source of power in the classroom has been thought to have given way to a more reciprocal power relationship, where students and their teachers to a greater or lesser extent share control (Cothran and Ennis, 1997). However, even if this is a true reflection of the power relationship between students and their teachers, it could still lead to teachers influencing what the students might wish to contribute to what is essentially a private and confidential interview. By avoiding school involvement, there would also be no possibility of a third party misrepresenting the nature of the research as it was communicated to the student.



I did not come to regret my reluctance to involve schools. I could be reasonably sure that the participants were not influenced by what their teachers might say about them and they knew that, as their school would not be aware of their participation, they could talk freely in the knowledge that what they said would not be fed back to their teachers. The emphasis would be seen to be on the individual and their personal experience, free from the influence of their teachers and their parents.

The criteria for recruiting the participants were that they should be students of secondary school age with deafness identified as a significant factor in their education. They would be oral and spend the majority of their time in school in mainstream classrooms alongside the other students in their school. The second consideration was whether the participants should include students who communicate by sign rather than by spoken English. 79.3% of deaf students communicate using spoken English only. I decided that deaf signing students would not be included in this investigation. These students use a completely different language from Spoken English. For example British Sign Language (BSL) represents a minority language with no connection to spoken English. Only 2% of students use BSL as their first language. It follows that BSL users need to be investigated in their own right.

The education of students who sign is significantly different from those students who are predominantly oral (Jeanes et al., 2000). In order to engage in mainstream secondary classrooms, signing students require access to interpreters who have high level translation skills. Few teachers in mainstream school have signing skills. The number of variables introduced by signing makes the inclusion of signing students with oral students invalid in this investigation, given that the issues for the two groups are so different.

Some deaf students are aided with hearing aids and some by cochlear implants. It is important to consider how the method of aiding might influence the results of this investigation. In a recent investigation relating to deaf children with cochlear implants and those with hearing aids (Bat-Chava et al., 2005), it was found that, on average, both groups of children

perform at a level appropriate to their age. Other studies (Dawson et al., 1995; Ponton et al., 1999; Svirsky et al., 2000) have shown that children with cochlear implants progress at the same rate as children with normal hearing. They show delays in the areas of speech and oral language experience because they started at a lower level.

On this evidence, there is some justification for including both students who are aided with hearing aids and students with cochlear implants in the same investigation. The research question refers to their individual experiences of the classroom rather than the effectiveness of their hearing. All the students were engaged in mainstream classrooms where they were expected to participate orally, suggesting that, irrespective of how they were aided, they were able to hear sufficiently well to engage purposefully in one-to-one dialogue in ideal listening conditions in their own homes.

In order to recruit the participants, I approached the National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS). I did not wish to approach schools or the hearing impairment services of local authorities. I wanted to be able to reassure the participants, from the start of the study, that I had not been in touch with their schools and had come directly to them. I also wanted them to be volunteers from a wide geographical area, attending different schools and not being in regular contact with each other.

From my initial contact, it was suggested that an approach through the regional directors might prove fruitful. Each region has a local newsletter and the regional directors might agree to include an advertisement describing my research and inviting the parents of children who might be interested to contact me. In the event, I contacted the regional directors of Berkshire, Birmingham, Buckinghamshire, Gloucestershire, Hampshire, Herefordshire, Isle of Wight, Kent, Oxfordshire, Staffordshire, Surrey, Wiltshire, Warwickshire, West Sussex, and nine London boroughs (Appendix 9). The advertisements resulted in ten families indicating their interests and giving me their contact details. I contacted each of the families and the ten students who eventually participated in the

investigation were the same students who had initially volunteered to participate.

I agreed with each of the parents over the telephone that I should visit the family home at an agreed date and time and explain the nature of my research and what I was attempting to accomplish. Then, on the same occasion, having obtained written consent, I would enter into dialogue with the participating student for a period of approximately an hour.

### **Home visits**

On the day of the visit, I introduced myself to the parents and the student. I told the parents and students who I was, my own background in education and in the education of deaf students. I emphasised the voluntary nature of the research and the fact that the student could withdraw from their participation at any time without any questions being asked as to the reasons why.

During the visit, I asked the parents to fill out a form (Appendix 5), giving some very basic details of the student and I asked the parents and the students separately to sign a form (Appendices 6 and 7), indicating their willingness to participate, given what had been explained to them.

The interviews took place in the student's home. Only the student and I, as the investigator, were present in the room. The parents were present in the house throughout the interview, but they had agreed with the student that they would not attempt to listen to what was being said.

Prior to the interview, a laptop computer with good quality recording software had been set up, as in the pilot study, and the students were equipped with a clip-on lapel microphone. The intention was that the technicalities of the interview would be totally transparent and would not interfere with the recording of the student's voice. Recording was continuous from the moment the interview started until it was established that the participant had no more to contribute.

At the beginning of recording, there was an introduction to the session based upon the critical incident approach, as described in the pilot study.

Four questions were presented orally and in writing on a sheet that was presented to the student (Appendix 8). Having begun to talk and to engage with the initial questions, very little prompting was necessary in most cases, and most of the students talked fluently and purposefully about their experiences in the classroom.

Since it was my intention to attempt to elicit as much from the participants as possible with minimal input from me as the researcher, I endeavoured to restrict my responses to encouragement and brief prompts, if the student paused. One student required more prompting and encouragement than the other nine. Periods of silence were deliberately tolerated, that is not interrupted, as this enabled the participants to gather their thoughts and reflect on what they might say next.

### **The reflexive nature of research**

I recognised that I could not approach this investigation without some interests and assumptions of my own and that these assumptions might predispose me to my own interpretive framework (Grover, 2004). By recognizing this possibility explicitly, the premature development of a hypothesis, no matter how tentative, was at least minimised. My intention was to interrogate my research process and to be 'reflexive' in all aspects of what I had proposed (Hellowell, 2006).

I was aware, during the interviews, of the relationship between me as a researcher and the participant. I am a physically large, older adult male and students at the time of the interview had had little time to get to know me. In such a situation, I had to consider whether the students would be prepared to contribute at all to the interview and whether what they said would be influenced by the fact that I was at an age that the students would be more likely to associate with their grandparents than with any other group.

In my response to these possible misgivings, I was aware that I have spent the whole of my professional career interacting with students of all ages and all abilities, often conducting one-off interviews with students whom I had not met previously and would be unlikely to see again.

There is evidence that adults who are perceived as belonging to the grandparent age group are able to engage effectively with adolescent students (Dunifon, 2013; Miller et al., 2012; Waites, 2007). It is also relevant that the teachers with whom the students are in daily contact would represent a range of ages, some of whom would be of a similar age to mine. As evidence of the effectiveness of the engagement with the students, I would refer to the transcripts, which do not appear to reflect any significant inhibition on the part of the students.

### **Analysis of the transcripts**

The analysis of text has been described as requiring four tasks: (1 ) discovering themes and subthemes, (2)reducing the number of themes to make them more manageable (3) building hierarchies of themes and (4) linking themes into theoretical models. (Ryan and Bernard, 2003). The approaches for constructing themes can range from mechanistic approaches, such as word counts to line by line analysis that is labour intensive and requires human intervention since the task is beyond the capability of a computer (Ryan and Bernard, 2003). I decided to use a line by line analysis in order to utilise as much of the data as possible.

When computer programmes are used to assist text analysis, it remains the ultimate responsibility of the program user to analyse the text and create a theory (Fielding and Lee, 1998; Macmillan and Koenig, 2004). I sought a program that would facilitate the process of analysing and organising text in such a way as to assist me in developing theoretical insights. I explored the possibility of using commercial software which has been specifically developed for the purpose of theme analysis, but considered such software did not provide me with any advantage over using Excel. Excel enabled me to retain control over the analysis at all stages. It was observed by Ritchie et al. (2003) that 'most spreadsheet 'worksheets' can be adapted in a matter of minutes to accommodate a thematic chart.' (Ritchie et al.,2003, p.220)

All the participants contributed with sufficient insight and fluency to provide useful data. Since some students had more to say, some interviews were longer than others, and some participants spoke more fluently than others, but the ten students are all represented in the analysis of the transcripts.

Following the interviews, the recordings were carefully transcribed. Where there was any doubt as to what the students had said, the recording was listened to several times and, if necessary, the recording on the additional digital recorder was consulted. What appears in the transcript is the best representation of what was heard. Where the student hesitated, the pause is indicated on the transcript by three dots thus '...'; where the student emphasised what they said, the words were underlined and any relevant audible non-verbal reaction, for example, audible laughter, was included within brackets. My questions and any comments I made during the interview are indicated by italics.

As a first step in the analysis, I anonymised the transcripts in line with ethical considerations (BERA, 2011), giving letters (A-J) and fictitious names to each of the participants (Alicia – John). Line numbers were then added to the transcripts (Appendix 1). All future reference to passages from the transcripts included the line numbers which remained fixed, facilitated easy reference and ensured the context was preserved. The following is an extract from one of the transcripts:

99	<i>Tell me about your interaction with the teachers.</i>
100	
101	Most teachers are really good – I mean they do...I'm quite shy, to be honest, 'cos...
102	um... in a lesson when you've got 30 children in a room and you can't hear what the
103	teacher's saying or you don't fully understand the work, it can be quite embarrassing,
104	putting your hand up in front of 29 other students and saying ' Actually, miss, I don't
105	understand what you have just said. Can you say that again?' I just keep quiet and I
106	don't say anything until the end of the lesson.

**Figure 9: Extract from Faith's Transcript (Appendix 1)**

The transcripts were scrutinised by a critical friend to increase the level of objectivity in interpreting what the students were communicating. Ryan and Bernard (2003) refer to the use of other people, who are referred to

as 'coders', to assist in validating the process (Ryan and Bernard, 2003, p.95). The critical friend also listened to the original recordings while following the transcripts to check for accuracy.

Ryan and Bernard (2003) refer to the research of Sandelowski (1995), in which he states that the validity of the analysis depends on different people agreeing on the extent to which the identified themes describe the same things:

'Strong intercoder agreement also suggests that the concept is not just a figment of the investigator's imagination and adds to the likelihood that a theme is also valid.' (Ryan and Bernard, 2003)

The data was analysed using a Grounded Theory approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Analysis of data using this approach is a 'continuous and iterative process' (Ritchie et al. 2003, p.219), but there are two key stages. The first stage requires the data to be managed and the second stage involves making sense of the data through 'descriptive or explanatory accounts' (Ritchie et al., 2003, p.219).

Each transcript was taken in turn and each point made by the student was noted on an Excel spreadsheet against its line number. Ritchie et al. (2003) suggest that it is important that the process of analysing the transcripts does not lead to crucial sections of material being removed from the context in such a way that it is then irretrievable. Where more than one line number was important in identifying all that the student had contributed, the line numbers were carefully noted. Where there are gaps in line numbers listed in the initial analysis, it indicates where on the recording I was asking a question and/or it reflects the text being double spaced. Every point made by all the participants was captured in the analysis:

F	394-5	I think I've been really lucky as a deaf person...you do hear stories about the deaf being bullied but I do get the occasional tease, but I just brush it off.
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**Figure 10: Analysis of Faith's transcript (Appendix 2)**

The next step in the analysis was to log each unit of meaning (Kennedy and Lingard, 2006), which could be a sentence, a clause, a few sentences or occasionally a paragraph (Appendix 2). Against each point, a theme describing the topic under discussion was added. The figure below illustrates the assigned theme of resilience.

F	394-5	I think I've been really lucky as a deaf person...you do hear stories about the deaf being bullied but I do get the occasional tease, but I just brush it off.	Resilience
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**Figure 11: Analysis of Faith's transcript with theme (Appendix 2)**

The guiding questions were: 'What is this about?' and 'What is being referred to here?' To do this, I had to become completely familiar with the data that had been collected. Typing out the transcripts and listening to the recording several times, facilitated this process of familiarisation. Bogdan and Biklen (1982) suggested reading over the text at least twice (Bogdan and Biklen, 1982, p.165), in fact I had read the transcripts many times.

Ascribing these themes is not claimed to be an objective process and it is recognised that other researchers, using the same data, may arrive at different descriptors. Dey (1993) commented on the fact that there are potentially many different interpretations of the same data:

'there is no single set of categories [themes] waiting to be discovered. There are as many ways of 'seeing' the data as one can invent.' (Dey, 1993, pp. 110–11, cited in Ryan and Bernard, 2003, p.103)

One particular concern is bringing preconceived thoughts to theme identification:



'Prior theorizing, as Charmaz (1990) said, can inhibit the forming of fresh ideas and the making of surprising connections. And by examining the data from a more theoretical perspective, researchers must be careful not to find only what they are looking for. Assiduous theory avoidance, on the other hand, brings the risk of not making the connection between data and important research questions.' (Ryan and Bernard, 2003, p.94)

It is quite possible that within statements students make, more than one theme can be identified and when this happens, it is important not to make an initial judgment about which theme is the more important. Therefore in seeking to analyse the data thoroughly and without prejudice, some of the statements were ascribed to more than one theme.

The individual spreadsheets were then sorted according to the themes (Appendix 3).

Name	Line		Theme
F	325-7	On Year 6 to Year 8 or 9...I relied on my TAs quite a lot. I think as I got older, not only have I got more independent, I have <u>wanted</u> to become more independent.	Resilience/ Insight
F	394-5	I think I've been really lucky as a deaf person...you do hear stories about the deaf being bullied but I do get the occasional tease, but I just brush it off.	Resilience
F	421	<i>How do you handle that? How do you deal with it?</i> Brush it off... You get used to it. (427)	Resilience

**Figure 12: Analysis of Faith's Transcript – sorted (Appendix 3)**

All the students who had contributed any point relating to a particular theme were included in the relevant spreadsheet (Appendix 4). The following is a section of a spreadsheet on the theme of Resilience, including contributions by three students, E, F and G:

Name	Line		Theme
E	483-8	Sometimes all the students behind me they talk all the time and won't even learn so that's what the teacher has to go on shouting..... I'm feeling okay. I'm not upset. I'm not angry	Resilience
F	325-7	On Year 6 to Year 8 or 9...I relied on my TAs quite a lot. I think as I got older, not only have I got more independent, I have <u>wanted</u> to become more independent.	Resilience/ insight
F	394-5	I think I've been really lucky as a deaf person...you do hear stories about the deaf being bullied but I do get the occasional tease, but I just brush it off.	Resilience
F	421	<i>How do you handle that? How do you deal with it?</i> Brush it off..... You get used to it. (427)	Resilience
G	183-4	<i>Do you think you have extra difficulty because you are deaf?</i> Maybe but I don't think it's that big because I can still hear quite a lot when, like, it's noisy.	Resilience

**Figure 13 : Extract from the theme of Resilience, showing the contribution of three students including Faith (Appendix 4)**

There was an equivalent separate spreadsheet for each theme. It should be noted that the majority of students contributed to most of the themes and, in this case, nine of the ten participants had made a contribution relevant to the particular theme of resilience.

Once the themes, drawn from the content of the transcripts, had been determined, they were grouped using a smaller number of broader, higher order categories (Ritchie et al.,2003, p.219).

Arriving at a smaller number of higher order categories was a carefully considered and reflective process. The aim was to place the themes into a broader theoretical framework to facilitate further discussion and to relate this investigation to previous research concerning the experience of deaf students in mainstream schools.

The 'barriers to learning' theme arose from the explicit accounts offered by the students themselves in the interviews. They were able to describe situations where being a deaf student in a mainstream classroom had immediate consequences for their learning. The 'support' theme encompasses a more reflective account of the students' experiences. They offered both positive and negative reflections on how their interactions with others in the classroom impacted upon them. The 'relationships' higher order theme arose directly from the importance

students attributed to relationships within the data, echoing the findings of other empirical studies of deaf students in mainstream classrooms (Hardy, 2010). The 'personal responses' higher order theme acknowledged the vivid accounts of students' personal reactions and observations in the day-to-day life of the classroom. Such responses were in accord with my increasing knowledge of relevant theoretical frameworks with particular reference to the themes of 'coping' and 'resilience.'

Having identified possible higher order themes, I returned to the whole data set to make sure that the higher order themes were able to include all the lower order themes identified and made sense in terms of what each of the students had contributed.

In the months following the interviews, I attempted to engage three participants in a diary exercise. Having contacted their parents and obtained their permission, I produced a package including a hand-held tape recorder and an outline of what I hoped to achieve by way of a brief account of school life over a few days. In fact only one of the students responded to this exercise. The other two students indicated that when they had time they would complete the exercise, but eventually, in consultation with their parents, I concluded that it would be unethical to apply any pressure and I reassured the participants that they could withdraw from further participation.

Following this analysis of the data, I was able to discuss the findings in relation to the research questions and to the research literature. The themes and their significance are discussed in Chapter 4.

## **CHAPTER 4      Analysis**

### **Introduction**

An important principle guiding the current study is that of the need to listen directly to the voice of the young person. In this analysis of the data, it is important that it is the authentic voice of the child (Grover, 2004) that is being analysed.

What is intended is that the themes should arise from careful analysis of the data. As far as possible, preconceived ideas of what information the data might contain were actively suppressed. This analysis is based entirely on the transcripts derived from the interviews (Braun and Clarke, 2006). For each and every extract from the interviews, the line number has been included, and it is therefore possible to trace each and every utterance back to the original transcripts, ensuring that the context in which the statement was made is safeguarded.

Having made clear my intention with regard to analysing as objectively as possible only what the students contributed, it is nevertheless inevitable that what is included in the analysis will to some extent reflect my own choices. The question of objectivity in research is questioned by Phillips (1990) who concludes:

"Objectivity" is the label - the "stamp of approval" - that is used for enquiries that are at one end of the continuum; they are enquiries that are prized because of the great care and responsiveness to criticism with which they have been carried out. Enquiries at the other end of the continuum are stamped as "subjective" in that they have not been sufficiently opened to the light of reason and criticism. (Phillips, 1990, p.35)

I fully recognise that, however careful I might be, other interpretations of the data might be possible. This is quintessentially a qualitative analysis of the data. Although many students made similar points, that is, they contributed to the development of a common theme, there are examples

in the data where only one or two students have made a point, but in my opinion, the point is sufficiently important to be included in the analysis. For example, Debra is comparing her present placement with a previous placement. Her unique experience and her reaction to her experience is reported in some detail:

**Debra:** "...like... they were really strict, they were. One school I went to, and it wasn't really helpful because like I...I... it was an old Victorian school and... like... I couldn't hear anything. And they kept telling me off for no reason. 'Cos, like, I might have accidentally missed something but I don't know that I missed it – that's why you need to go over it and like say it a bit more clearer and just like, the day I left there, 'Oh, why are you leaving the school?'. it's just like... you can't rebuild the whole school can you, in like 24 hours or over a weekend ...?" (146-152)

With the possibility that my interpretation of the data might be unacceptably idiosyncratic, I asked a teacher who is used to talking to secondary school students and marking their work and could comment on my interpretation of what the students were intending to communicate to become a critical friend (Swaffield and MacBeath, 2003; Ryan and Bernard, 2003). This critical analysis enabled me to reflect on the data and to refine my commentary where the intention of the student could be clarified or the remark could be placed in the context of general classroom experience.

A further means of reinforcing the findings was to compare the themes identified in this analysis with the themes that were adopted in the RNID investigation (RNID, 2002) since both studies were concerned with consulting deaf students about their classroom experience. Where the themes are common to both investigations, this has been noted in the analysis; where this investigation has provided data that was not in the 2002 research, this has also been noted.

The labels attached to the themes were derived from a 'bottom-up' approach to the data as opposed to a 'top-down' approach, meaning that the themes emerged according to what the participants chose to include or to emphasise during the interviews (Suddaby, 2006). They were not drawn from findings or conclusions of studies discussed in the literature review.

Once the themes, drawn from the content of the transcripts, had been determined, they were grouped into four, higher order categories. The higher order categories, barriers to learning, support, relationships and personal responses provide the framework within which the themes are discussed.

## **Barriers to learning**

The first research question is: 'When deaf students talk about their classroom experiences, what do they believe to be the important issues?' The students described a number of situations which resulted in their learning being enhanced in the classroom. They also described situations which had a negative impact on their learning and in effect created barriers to their learning.

## **Practicalities**

*(Re: Radio Aid) "...say if I was at the back of the classroom and my teacher was at the front, if he talked to someone, it sounds like he's talking right into my ear. Yes that's really good..." (Carl: 76-78)*

The students in this investigation, as in the 2002 investigation, (RNID, 2002), are not able to engage with their lessons unaided. All the students are reliant on technology to facilitate their participation in their lessons. They have digital hearing aids or cochlear implants. A radio aid is often worn by the teacher and the student receives a signal which they can amplify.

The data in this study shows that all the students in this investigation have of necessity become experts in the use of technology on which they

depend for their everyday interactions in the classroom, both with their teachers and their peers. From their evidence, it is clear that without a practical understanding of the technology and the way in which it is most effectively deployed, the classroom experiences of the students would be significantly different. This practical understanding is the first theme to be illustrated in this analysis.

All the students refer to the technology which supports their hearing in the classroom and they demonstrate their expert knowledge of the use of radio aids:

**Edward:** "Um....it's like a phone and on the top, there's a switch and it goes that way – that way is on and that way is off...., well I have a radio aid. And it's in a box and I take the radio aid box with me to different kinds of lessons ...but not PE 'cos in PE I do not wear my radio because it's outside education. If I have any other lessons, like English and Maths and allsorts, I wear my radio aid and take my box with me and take it to a

**John:** "I have a sort of thing, it's like a microphone thing. It's called a radio aid but the teachers can speak to me but I can't speak to them." (31-32)

The students appreciate the difference the radio aid makes and how important it is to them:

**Carl:** "I'm the closest at the front and I think that's good ... and... the radio aid which makes it better and my glasses –it makes it clearer for me to see." (429, 432-433)

**Irene:** "I use a radio aid - which helps me hear what the teacher is saying much more clearer than without the radio aid."(4-5)

**John:** "Well because, sometimes if there's noise in the classroom, I don't have it, I can just hear the noise, but if the radio aid's there, I can hear what the teacher is saying so it's basically like a transmitter and I can hear that in my aid and so that kind of almost blocks the sound out." (455-458)

The students are in the best position to know if the radio aid is being used to the best effect. A particular problem is deciding where to place the microphone. The students like to have control over where the radio aid is positioned, especially when the class is engaged in group work:

**Irene:** "...there are times in class, like in English, they have to be put into groups, and then I have to take my radio aid and put it in the middle of the table so that I can hear what everybody is saying..." (219-221)

**Bryan:** "I put the microphone on the highest setting and put it in the middle of the table." (88)

Here the student is able to hear what the teacher is saying to other students as the teacher moves around the classroom but this is interfering with the student's participation in her own group work. The student is sufficiently assertive to take control of the microphone with a successful outcome:

**Alicia:** "Well...because the teacher is going round and hearing what the other people are saying. 'Cos I can hear the teacher saying something to the people, the children, and I can't hear my friends because my teacher is speaking and so it's very hard for me and it's very noisy too. So I ask the teacher, 'Can I have the microphone? And I put it in the middle of the table and I can hear everyone on the table.'" (323-327)

In a closely related situation, the need for vigilance on the part of the students is illustrated. Only the student is aware of the potential problem for the teacher and some participants in the study show commendable concern for maintaining confidentiality:

**Alicia:** "I tell them not to...because I can hear them out of classrooms so I have a ...if they're talking to another teacher, I say to them, 'Can you put the microphone off and then I won't hear your private conversations?' I tell them what the on and off button is (Yes) and well after a couple of days they sort of seem



to know...they sort of seem to know they need to wear it and ...know what buttons to press." (216-220)

**Edward:** ".....well if the teacher has to go outside and talk to the other teacher in private, then I have to press the middle button which is the mute button to switch it off. Or maybe they switch off the button on top so that they can talk to the other person, I mean to the teacher, something in private." (472-475)

This student describes her frustration when she is denied access to the use of the microphone:

**Gemma:** "Sometimes when...um...you want to tell the teacher that...um...the microphone has been switched off accidentally - and you are asking a question and they say, 'Put your hand down,' and you're just trying to tell them that the microphone has been switched off." (55-58)

In the following responses, the students describe the difference their hearing aids make in their ability to understand their teachers:

**Debra:** "...when I got my hearing aid, everything like...clicked... like... I could suddenly do things that I couldn't do before and like people could understand me better." (118-120)

**John:** "...it comes from like...um...a radio aid to my hearing aid and so the teachers have to wear it for me to be able to ---that's the whole point of it - so that I can hear better in lessons what they are saying..." (404-406)

The appreciation of the difference good use of radio aids provides is mirrored by comments from a student about her implants. She compares the improvement resulting from having two implants as opposed to one:

**Gemma:** "It's so much better having two rather than one." (614)

**Gemma:** "It just makes it louder and it is so much better because if you have only one, then your head is sort of crooked... and so the.....it's like the road and it's really busy,

you might have to turn to the other side, but if you've got two, you don't have to do that and it just makes everything so much clearer." (618-621)

The extent to which the students lip-read varies (Altieri et al., 2011). Some students rely on it to ensure their understanding of what is being said; others use it to a lesser extent. Effective lip-reading requires a direct line of sight between the person speaking and the person listening as described by this student:

**Irene:** "There are also techniques of what teachers use to help me learn such as they have to face me when they are talking, not facing the whiteboard rather than talking to the class. And that helps." (11-13)

Concerning the environmental management of the teaching -learning relationship, the students emphasise that they use lip-reading as an adjunct to enhancing their understanding:

**Bryan:** "It (lip-reading) helps me make sure that I have heard the word right." (149)

**Harrison:** (*Why do you sit at the front?*) "Because I can hear better and to see better (124)...I need to look at the teacher (128)... I need to look at his lips so I can hear him." (132)

One student commented on the slightly more peripheral role that lip-reading may play in the classroom for her:

**Gemma:** "Like...if it's really busy and...um...it's quite noisy, then it helps but I haven't really used it very often." (580-581)

**Gemma:** (Group work) "sometimes, if it's really noisy, I might lip-read a little bit but most of the time I just listen - it's fine." (166-167)

Here the students refer to the importance of their position in the classroom in relation to the rest of the class in order to give them optimal opportunities to hear what is being said:

**John:** "If I'm sitting at the front or sometimes they'll be answering a question, they'll be doing it at the back of my head. So if I'm like in the second row, it will be easier because I can see sort of more round. So for some lessons that I find harder, where there's lots of questions and stuff, I might sit in the second row or the third row." (151-155)

**Debra:** "it's better if I'm like near the front or at the front because everything that goes on behind me, I take no notice of. I focus on what's in front of me. That's the main thing I focus on. That's what I like. If you try to talk behind me, I might not always hear everything you're saying." (93-96)

**Gemma:** "I normally sit somewhere so that I can see the whiteboard and the other whiteboard, because we have two different sorts of whiteboard and the teacher, but I can still can see lots of people, and...um...I know who is saying what and things like that." (43-46)

Their positioning in the classroom can have important consequences for deaf students. Being close to the source of sound may be helpful:

**Debra:** "She (Maths teacher) does kind of get that I need to be near the front and I need to be able to see her." (137-138)

**Bryan:** "I'm normally near the front because most teachers know about my deafness." (201-202)

**Debra:** "In my maths class, the teacher knows I'm deaf- she is aware of the situation and she sits me right in front which helps. So I'm near the board and I can hear better. And it's easier for me to work, 'cos like... if someone is looking at me, I can hear them, but if they're behind me, I don't know." (89-93)

However in contrast to this, two students commented that the most advantageous position in the classroom for them was not necessarily at the front:

**Yusuf:** "Because at the back, I can see the teacher but I can't exactly lip-read him or her well. If I was in the second row, fine, I can lip-read him or her well because you're closer to the back and I didn't like being seated in the front row because it made me feel isolated, it made it feel as if I were a separate part of the class..... " (262-265)

.....But the teacher he was like, 'Are you deaf?' I went 'Yes' and he went 'You have to sit in the front row.' And I was like, 'I don't want to because in the front row you're too close and I can't exactly look up the whole time to look at your mouth' –so I preferred it in the second row and then the teacher would be like, 'No, no, no, you have to sit in the front row' and I had to spend the whole year in the front row." (273-278)

**Debra:** "But then after a term, they changed everyone's seat and they decided to put me at the side of the classroom so I could see everyone's voices. I found that harder. Because ...when I was in the middle, I could look straight ahead and had to like twist and turn...and I think they just did it without even asking me, assuming that I'd agree to it but I didn't really find it helped much." (75-79)

It is common practice to use audio-visual aids in classrooms. The use of video or DVD with subtitles can increase the access of deaf students to the curriculum, but this is not always welcomed by other students or by teachers:

**Xavier:** "...sometimes when we were watching a film, I had to put up my hand and say, 'Can we put subtitles on?' and then hear people groaning 'Oh, Why?!' and then sometimes the teacher would shout and say, 'Well, we've got a deaf student in the class.' Sometimes I would just ignore them and it got to a point when I didn't even bother putting up my hand because I didn't want to cause any disruption in the class or anything." (99-104)

**John:** "Some teachers get a little fussy about it but..."

*What do they say?*

**John:** "They're like... 'I've already played the video and I'd have to go back to the menu to put subtitles on, so I'll have to start again.'" (195-200)

## **Noise**

*"Well, it can be very noisy in classrooms, so when the teacher's sitting next to me, I sort of look at them." (Alicia: 240-241)*

Most of the participants referred to noise as a particular issue and for this reason noise became a theme in itself. Eight of the ten students who participated in the current study refer to the level of noise in the classroom. It is noted that 'noise' also figured prominently in the account of the 2002 research (RNID,2002).

The data provides evidence that the participants regarded classroom noise as a significant issue for their learning:

**Gemma:** "it might be...like...really noisy 'cos if you have...like...29 people talking at once it is quite loud..." (18-19)

**Faith:** "...in a lesson when you've got 30 children in a room and you can't hear what the teacher's saying or you don't fully understand the work, it can be quite embarrassing, putting your hand up in front of 29 other students and saying, 'Actually, miss, I don't understand what you have just said. Can you say that again?' (102-105)

The students refer to the level of noise in their classrooms and the effect it has on them:

**Gemma:** "...it can get a little bit harder to read...um...like to speak because you have...may have to raise your voice and then people are shouting and...um... it makes it harder to listen..." (171-173)

**John:** "what makes it difficult... if people are talking and constantly like messing around and making rude noises so that really you can't hear the teacher. No one can hear the teacher, so it makes it even harder for me." (116-118)

Students describe the way in which noise interferes with their attempts at individual work:

**Harrison:** (*How does it affect you when the class is noisy?*)  
"...I can't concentrate on my work and...I can't understand the teacher." (519-521)

**Bryan:** "Like say, there's...like noise...like in a test like...too much noise during a test, then I'd find it difficult to concentrate."  
(18-19)

**Irene:** "...there are times in class when it is really loud. And it's very destructive." (88)

The following responses are focussed on the effect noise has on participation in whole class or group work:

**Bryan:** "Like too much noise. Say...like...when we are doing group work and there's like five or six different groups in the classroom. That would make it a bit more difficult for me to hear my own group." (68-70)

**Debra:** "I can't really hear the teacher or I am hearing the person nearest to me (Yes) and with really loud noises – just like...when like the whole class is whispering -Only a couple of people are listening –I can struggle with that." (213-216)

Faith also highlights the effect of classroom noise in response to one of the critical incident questions relating to difficulties in communication:

**Faith:** "When people are shouting across the room. Like 'cos obviously what I say - Drama is a very practical lesson, so obviously you've got less control if you like of the class. Then

they can get really excitable and shouting; then it sometimes gets harder to hear what everyone is saying." (64-67)

### **Deaf awareness**

*"I have good communication with people, like with teachers and my friends because they, they know all the deaf awareness." (Irene: 61-62)*

In relation to the barriers to learning that are created by the limitations of technology and inevitable noise in the classroom, the students' observations show that they are dependent on the close cooperation of their teachers. The students are familiar with the concept of deaf awareness and they have sufficient experience of their classrooms to be aware of teachers who show good deaf awareness and those whose lack of deaf awareness leads to a failure in communication. Deaf awareness of the teachers involved in the 2002 investigation (RNID, 2002) was included as a theme.

In order to learn, the students must be with people in their classroom who are aware that they are deaf and who, having been made aware, behave in an appropriate manner towards them in a way that enhances their learning. In the following two responses, the students describe the effect and consequences for them of interacting with teachers who have contrasting attitudes towards their deaf students.

Here the teacher tells the student what they can expect in the maths lessons. The student understands why the teacher has taken the position they have but then explains the consequences it has had for her learning:

**Faith:** "Some teachers are really undeaf-aware, like the Maths teacher- he's also my form tutor. Well I've just had to move down, because he was playing really loud music in class and he used to go really fast explaining things and yes, I could hear him, but I was having to listen to him, trying to process what he was saying and then do the work - but it took me ages to, like, understand what he was saying, if you know what I mean? (Yes) So then I'd fall behind with the work because I was like, 'I don't

understand' and then...but he wasn't very...I don't know, what's the word? – he didn't really understand why I was finding it difficult, so then he wouldn't try to change it." (132-140)

*Do you have any idea why he found it difficult to understand?*

I think it was because he was going so fast – some of the maths things are quite difficult concepts (Yes) like algebra....Trigonometry...um...

*Do you think that he understood how deaf you are?*

He's been my form tutor for five years and then...um...when I went in year 7... (laughing) I've had him since Year 9 as a teacher - but when I went in Year 7, he said to me 'I'm going to treat you as normal, just like everyone else. I'm going to make no allowances for the fact that you're deaf.' That's what he said when I first started. To me, yeah, that can be a good thing, because you don't like being seen as different from everyone else but then there are times when actually, yes, you do need those little allowances. Do you know what I mean?" (142-155)

Here the teacher is behaving in a way which the student appreciates and which is more likely to enhance their learning:

**Faith:** "My English teacher, she's very aware of how difficult it can be for me. She is... like today for example, my radio aid wasn't working very well, so I had to tell her – 'Miss, it's been playing up', because it was sounding really different. And then, I told her, and she goes, 'Well, let me know if you find it difficult.' "(193-196)

The participants are able to make allowances for the apparent lack of awareness shown by their teachers. Here the participant is demonstrably tactful in interacting with the teacher when faced with, what the student describes as, a 'challenging lesson':



**Irene:** "So, at school...um...in lessons, um... there are some challenging lessons and there's some good lessons because...um...because it depends on how the teacher deals with things. –such as with your deafness – like...er...for example, in one lesson, like...um...a teacher...like...I put my hand up and say 'What did you just say?' and then they tell me what they have just said because they like...um.. because they had the radio aid on but they had lots of necklaces around it, so it like rattles a lot (OK) and so therefore that takes over what they're saying... off the sound. So I have to then say, 'Please, can you take off all your jewellery? I'm not saying it doesn't look nice on you. It's just that it does affect how I can hear you.'"  
(157-165)

The consequence for the student of a lack of teacher deaf awareness is shown by this response to the supplementary question, 'What makes a good teacher for you?' The difficulty the student describes is that of being a deaf student in a mainstream classroom, faced by a teacher who raises their voice to keep order in a noisy class:

**Irene:** "A good teacher will be who ...not shout a lot- that...that...that really hurts my ears –it would hurt anyone...er...um...a teacher that...um... always faces me when they are talking, um...They're...um... they're very calm and patient and they don't like get offended easily with things... well, yeah.. –that makes a good teacher."

*Say, teachers shouting –how big a problem is that? Just a few or does it happen....*

"It does happen. And I had one teacher in French who just shouts constantly which... it was just a noisy class and he's just very like – he just shouts like... he just does that...and that makes it difficult because I then can't use my radio aid because it would just hurt my ear. So – and it would just affect my learning."

*Yes absolutely. Does he know this?*

"Yes, he does. He does... he does know it hurts me but I don't think he can help it. Just sometimes people can't help just doing things and I think that was just one of the things he couldn't help doing. And so that made it a bit harder to kind of like... like be patient –like alright, he shouts, but you just have to go along with it. I mean like you can't just say, 'Oh, can I change the teacher?' You can't just do that. *(that's right)* You have to go along with what you have to do." (175-194)

The students value teachers who reach out to them as learners, demonstrating an overview based on insight and sensitivity and without the need to constantly reiterate what is required:

**Bryan:** "In Art we have a deaf teacher... and... because he's deaf, he does like lip-reading tests and that's an advantage to me." (127-128)

**Irene:** "There are lessons, where they are good lessons because the teachers are very good at... of awareness of my deafness." (171-172)

Students also refer to the lack of overall insight:

**Faith:** "some teachers-they don't get the proper, the full picture, if you like." (217-218)

**Debra:** "...they put me in a class with someone (a teacher) with a speech thing (problem) and it didn't really occur to them that like...I might not always hear...like... It's just like...they didn't think properly." (177-180)

**Gemma:** "...they know that I am deaf but they don't like...um...teach any differently like to how they would teach someone else." (195-196)

**Yusuf:** "Most of the support did know that it was quite hard for me to understand other people. So they would sort of help me

because in some subjects, I had teachers who had quite a heavy accent - like a Scottish or Northern accent and they were quite hard for me to understand." (119-122)

One student commented on the arrangements a school might make in a meeting to address the needs of the deaf student, remarking that the outcome was not always successful:

**Irene:** "...you might have had a meeting about... like awareness of being deaf but they don't actually necessarily always take it on board." (17-18)

In addition to teachers showing a lack of deaf awareness, this student comments on peers who have a similar lack of deaf awareness:

**Irene:** "...people aren't always aware about technology for deaf people-so when I bring like my radio aid, people go 'Oh, can I say 'Hi' into that radio aid?' -so we get a bit distracted." (224-226)

Here the peer group show knowledge of the fact that some deaf people sign. However, John has to explain that he does not use much sign language:

*Do some people help? Do they get it right?*

**John:** "Well some people don't. They say 'Oh can you sign?' I can sign basic things like I don't know everything.

*Who says that?*

Well they say like ...not in a mean way – but some people in my form, because they know I'm deaf, they say 'Can you sign?' and I say 'Oh not that much. I can sign a few basic words.' (Mm) And they say 'that's...that's...' 'Oh I get that now.' And so...yeah." (331-341)

## Support

The second research question asks: 'How do deaf students respond to the support that they experience in mainstream schools?' The data provides evidence that all the students in this investigation have support that is over and above that which is normally available in schools. The support is given by qualified teachers, who may also have specialist roles such as teachers of the deaf or Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCO). Support is also given by teaching assistants who are not usually qualified teachers but who may have gained expertise by additional study or through practical experience in the classroom. In the 2002 study (RNID, 2002), there was considerable emphasis on the relationships between the students and those adults who were charged with offering them support.

### Mainstream teachers

*"I will ask the teacher.....'I don't get this because I didn't hear you properly'....and then he'll...help me on that part and explain it to me - which is quite good."*

*(Debra: 225-227)*

The students appear to have no difficulty in recognising the importance of their relationships with their teachers and the difference good relationships made to their ability to learn and to enjoy their learning:

**Gemma:** "My teacher's actually are (sic) really good at teaching maths.....Because she makes everything clearer and simpler so that I can understand it." (141, 145)

**Gemma:** "I like (Geography) because it's interesting and my teacher is really nice. And she...um...teaches us loads of interesting things in an interesting way..." (82-84)

**Irene:** "they're very calm and patient and they don't like get offended easily with things" (177-178)

**Faith:** (Re the Special Educational Needs Co-Ordinator, SENCO) "I don't really talk to her a lot but I do have a good enough relationship with her to go to her if I have a problem or if I am finding something difficult." (282-283)

**Bryan:** (Re the tutor) "She is the best because...um...er...I see her more often, so get used to... um... knowing her voice and stuff like that." (232)

This student shows her appreciation of teachers who respond to her request for individual support:

**Alicia:** "When we're working, they come round and actually like...if I put my hand up, they come round and help me...like how you do it." (185-187)

Generally the data shows that teachers are perceived positively by the students in their everyday interactions in the classroom. The students appreciate the opportunity to engage with their teachers on a close, one-to-one basis and they comment more positively when they can easily interact in this way. They were also appreciative of those teachers who were prepared to offer support spontaneously rather than have to be asked:

**Harrison:** "I'm like a slow writer and a bit fussy about it 'cos there's a lot of writing to do. They give me a sheet of paper with, like, easier work to do because they know I'm not top class and I'm not a very good worker." (318-321)

**Debra:** "...they'll always ask me, 'Are you OK with the work, the thing you've missed, or is there anything you want me to explain?' They will ask me all that..." (197-199)

**Debra:** "Other teachers sometimes offer me extra help because I don't always get the work" (144-145)

**Carl:** "Well, I think H is a lot of help to me and so is my teacher - he's very persuasive to me..."

*Tell me more*

Um... he has said negative things about me but he's telling me what I need to improve. Not like you're really bad at this so you're really bad at that. No, he says you need to practise for that. He doesn't say like...you're not really good." (408-415)

Students were also clear about times when teaching styles were not good and inhibited their learning:

**Irene:** "...there are some teachers who just can't control a class" (199-200)

**John:** "If you come, they say 'Just wait a minute, I'm marking books.' and so you come back a bit later and they're still marking books and so after a while you just get fed up and say 'I'll just do it tomorrow.'" (45-48)

The distinctive role of the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) in the support of the students is described in the following responses. The students see the SENCO as a person to consult in times of particular difficulty:

**Faith:** "... my SENCO, 'cos she's obviously had lots of experience and she's got good relationship with all the teachers" (296-297)

**Irene:** "...like the SENCO at school who helps people who have like specific needs like me who is deaf. So they're there to help..." (390-392)

On one occasion such intervention appeared to be less successful:

**Irene:** "I told the SENCO – 'You need to sort something out about this' and the SENCO did what she did and then...but this TA just didn't stop and I found that really frustrating." (486-488)

## Teachers of the deaf

*"I have this lady that comes every Thursday.....she's with a company that sees deaf children in school and sees how they're going on.....She's done tests..."*

**(Alicia: 443,445-447)**

A number of the participants reported that they had contact with a teacher of the deaf who visited their school from time to time. Uncertainty was expressed as to the relationship the teacher of the deaf had with their schools and who employed them:

**Alicia:** "The lady that comes – I'm not sure what she is but she works for a deaf impaired society and she sees children that are like me - and knows what's going on – like, 'How's your hearing aids? Are they working?'"(461-463)

However, students were aware of their existence and the limited remit with respect to themselves. They commented on the role of teachers of the deaf, which usually included the checking of hearing aids and the more practical issues relating to their deafness, rather than issues relating to the curriculum and access to the curriculum:

**Carl:** "...she gives me tests every now and then; she checks on me - see how I'm going, checks the radio aid to see if that's still working." (110-111)

**Alicia:** "I tell her..... If the people are interrupting me, I ask to tell the teacher...and it stops me from working. So that's the sort of stuff I tell her." (490-491)

One student recalled a particularly positive intervention from the teacher of the deaf, Mrs W.:

**John:** "Well, Mrs W at first she got me to...like..., she said 'Try the radio aid out.' And I said, 'But I used it in primary school and I didn't really see any difference in using it' and she said, 'I want you to try it' and it seemed, like, she was forcing me to try it and

she said 'I'm not really.' It felt like she was. So at first she seemed quite mean. But after a while, after I started to try it, I saw the difference it made and then I started to tell her how big the difference was and then she started to be quite nice afterwards because she wanted it to be better for me and so then she told me what to do to make it better and then I tried it out and she seemed quite pleased." (368-375)

The student recognises here that while he was at first reluctant to comply with the teacher's request, he was prepared to consider it. He recognised her expertise, his hearing improved and the relationship between them was established.

### **Teaching assistants**

*"She explains it to me and describes it so....if I don't still understand her, she describes it to me in a better way." (Harrison: 198-199)*

All the participants commented, usually favourably, on their relationship with the teaching assistants (TAs). The students are aware that the teaching assistant is assigned specifically to them. However they show insight into their actual deployment in the classroom which may involve other students:

**Alicia:** "well they're meant to be for me, or they can help the rest of the class." (510)

**Harrison:** "She's actually... she's supposed to be there just for me but say, like, someone puts their hand up, she goes to them if the actual teacher is busy." (224-225)

**Gemma:** "Well, they're sort of assigned to me but they do help other children" (358)

**Gemma:** "I do have a teaching assistant sometimes..... they help other people as well. But like if I need help they will come and help me." (345, 349-350)



The relationship between the majority of the students and their teaching assistant is described in positive terms. The students particularly appreciate the continuity of care that they received from their teaching assistant:

**Faith:** "...one of my TAs, I've had her since Year 2. She's still with me now... So that's been really nice -going through that journey" (232-233)

**Carl:** "I don't have her anymore because I'm in secondary school..... It's a bit sad for me because I had her... I think I had her also in infants; I've had her for four or five years in a row and I really liked her." (93, 101-103)

Here the students describe their interactions with their teaching assistants providing an opportunity to appreciate how important they are for them:

**Alicia:** "So when I have a problem, so what I'm doing, or how do you start, I put my hand up and the assistant will come to me and talk to me..." (510-512)

**Irene:** "I have a teaching assistant who sits next to me in class and um...tells me what...what...if I...I might have missed something really important..." (67-69)

**John:** "...with the assistant, .....I can say, 'I didn't get it' and 'Can you help me with that?' and they say, 'Oh yes, I'll help you with that.'" (102-103)

**John:** "If everyone's got their head down and concentrating then it's easier because if you don't get it, then your assistant teacher repeats it to you and then I get it... I move on....I speed on and I get the answer all right." (144-146)

**Harrison:** "Sometimes like with homework, when I can't do my homework, I go to them and she'll explain it to me." (456-457)

One student expressed the view that teaching assistants are more approachable than other members of staff:

**John:** "Assistant teachers are more sort of nicer than the teachers because they ...they will help you more than the teachers because if they can't understand it, they won't say 'Oh. No. Don't ask me this again'. They'll say, "Can you explain it in a better way?" (76)

**John:** "They're quite good..... They help you but they don't seem to put it forward. They...um...help you in any way that is possible and they're not mean. They don't tell you off, they just sort of help you with any questions." (61-65)

They may also be more accessible:

**Irene:** "...teaching assistants- they're always around to help you with anything."(389-390)

Not all the students welcome the support of the teaching assistants. Some students report unease at a situation where they are in receipt of useful and necessary support but are seen by their peers to be dependent on the presence of a classroom assistant. Some students seek to distance themselves from the teaching assistant:

**Debra:** "No. I don't have someone that follows me around all day." (196)

**Bryan:** "I used her slightly when I first went to the school but I don't really use her much." (357-358)

Part of the reason why students may wish to distance themselves from teaching assistant support is provided by these students who felt the teaching assistant was giving 'too much help':

**Irene:** "Like she just, when I needed help, she gave me too much help (OK)...um and she just kept doing it over again and again and again and I told the SENCO -'You need to sort something out about this...'" (485-487)

**Faith:** "Having TAs has been really helpful and without them, I would probably have done a lot worse than I have, 'cos I do

really well. But you're getting to that age now where you just want to be the same as everyone else - not having to wear a radio aid, not having to have a TA. So recently...she used to sit by me all the time in the lessons –so there used to be a spare seat next to me. (Yes) And she used to sit next to me all the time. "(239-244)

**Faith:** "Well it was really good because she used to ask me, 'Do you understand the work?' just making sure I understood every bit. It sometimes got a bit – I don't know, what's the word – like they were looking over you all the time. (Yes) And now I just need that space a little bit. I've asked her to move just that bit further away so that I can sit next to my friends. (Yes) And then if I need her, I put my hand up or just look at her and say, 'Can I have some help?'" (248-253)

Students describe possible limitations of teaching assistant support:

**Faith:** "my TA has to write notes so that I can try to keep up - but it's not the same." (74-75)

**Harrison:** (*So she is really important to you?*) "Yes. She's alright. Sometimes she gets really annoying (really annoying)". (*Why is she annoying?*) "Because...um...I don't know really." (459-462)

What these comments illustrate is the tension that results from the presence of the teaching assistant. The student knows why they might need a teaching assistant in practical terms, but the mere presence of the teaching assistant results in them feeling uneasy for reasons they sometimes (in Harrison's case) find it difficult to articulate.

## Relationships

### Friends

*"...they're kind and helpful..... they always do stuff for me. They're always there for me." (Harrison:353-354)*

Most of the participants were aware of the crucial role that friends play in their classroom experience and the support that good friends can offer. Friendship may be seen as a theme because of its significance for the students and the reliance they have on friendships when describing their experience of the classroom (Martin and Bat-Chava, 2003).

The evidence from the interviews would support the view that friendships are important to the participants. The students emphasise the different aspects of friendship. In the 2002 investigation, all the students interviewed 'talked about friendships extensively' (RNID, 2002, p 92.).

In the following responses, the emphasis is on talking and shared communication:

**Harrison:** "That's the best time we can talk (in group work) or when we talk in the playground, at break time or lunchtime."  
(103-104)

**Carl:** "I do have a best friend and me and him communicate very well." (171-172)

**Irene:** "If I'm having a bit of a hard time with my deafness, I can always just go and talk to them." (314-315)

Here the emphasis is on the happiness friendship brings:

**Carl:** "He's silly but not only to me. But he's funny, he's silly in a funny way. That's what he is like. But there are times when he's serious..." (375-376)

**Gemma:** "They (friends) just say I do the most funny things.....I don't tell jokes. It's not that sort of thing. I just make them laugh like every day things..... I always have a big smile on my face."  
(478, 487-488, 502)

**Edward:** (*Have you got a best friend?*) "My best friend in the world is C. (*Tell me about C.*) She's happy she's cheerful, friendly." (384, 388)

At times, the students relate their friendships explicitly to their deafness. They show a preference to be regarded as 'normal.' The students use the term 'normal' in the sense of being the same as everyone else and not being perceived as different just because they are deaf. They value the opportunity to interact with others without their deafness being an issue:

**Irene:** "My really close friends are really supportive. They are really good about my deafness awareness and I just find that so easy to deal with people who just know." (350-351)

**Irene:** "Um...yeah at school, if people who I'm friends with treat me like if I'm not deaf, because we're just so close...um...like they do everything I ask them to do. Like face me when we're talking. And we just talk." (506-509)

**John:** "They're good because they don't... they put that I'm deaf aside and they treat me normally, they treat me like them." (241-242)

For most of the students, there is no opportunity to form friendships with other deaf students during the school day because they are the only deaf student in the school. This extract relates to an unusual situation in which there are two deaf children in the same school. However, their deafness has not brought them together socially:

**Faith:** "She (another deaf person) has two hearing aids but it's quite difficult because the only thing we have in common is the fact that we're deaf." (349-350)

Some students commented on their contacts with other deaf students out of school:

**Faith:** "I get on really well with my deaf friends like because we understand each other a lot more. I think my mum and most of the other friends who see me with deaf people would say I am a lot more confident with them than I am with hearing people.

*It may seem an obvious question but why? What makes it different with other deaf students?*

'Cos they know where you're coming from.

*Which is?*

That you like being the same as everyone else. And that you can actually hear and yes, you're deaf but you're not stupid or anything." (445- 457)

**Irene:** *(They are all friends with hearing aren't they?)* "Yes they're hearing. I only have deaf friends who live quite far away from me. But I talk to them." (336-339)

**Debra:** "The Deaf Club that I and other children are in... and we go out once a month, every Saturday doing something..... I've been to Germany, to meet other German deaf children." (494-495,499)

In this response, the student reflects on some of the ambiguities of friendship and the difficulties that can ensue as a result of these ambiguities:

**Faith:** "It can be tiring, it can be frustrating sometimes when you're trying to tell the teacher or your TA that you don't understand it or it can be frustrating when you're trying to listen to your friends. It can sometimes be isolating when...you can only have one or two friends, to be honest with you. There's one friend that...we're almost a 'frenemy'. We get on; we don't get on. One minute we love each other; the next minute we hate each other. It's just a nightmare. And she can be a bit of a tease, a bit of a bully when she wants to be but I'm one of those people who's looked out for them? I do find it hard sometimes." (478-485)

Most of the students interviewed had friends at school and relationships with friends were generally positive. However, students also mentioned

relationships with some of their peers that were at best ambiguous (as in Faith's description above) and at times a cause for concern.

## **Bullying**

*"They said, ' OK, you're deaf, but you can hear perfectly fine. You have a radio aid, you have implants. Don't make excuses 'cos you're deaf.....Oh F(name) stop it!' " (Faith:403-405)*

Students in the 2002 investigation (RNID, 2002) identified bullying and teasing as an issue:

'They used to just swear at me all the time and start calling me names and stuff but I did say, one time, "If you're picking on me because I'm deaf, then you can just stop now." And they told me, "No, we're not picking on you because you're deaf." I think it got better since.' (RNID, 2002 p.103)

In the current study, students give accounts of bullying behaviour which relate directly to their deafness:

**Alicia:** "She's mean and she says mean things about my deafness. Like 'Oh how did you not hear? Can you hear me now?'... you know..."

*How do you explain this to yourself?*

"Um...I sort of...Oh. You know like ... when they say that, I'm like, 'Oh, I don't want to be deaf anymore. Why can't I be like anyone else?' Yes." (652-658)

**Debra:** "'Cos I'm deaf, I can't speak properly and that then comes from people like copying my voice. I'm just like, 'Well I can't help it, can I, because I'm deaf. How would you like it if I did that?' (360-362)

Carl had a particular problem with bullying which was mentioned throughout the interview:

**Carl:** "It's mainly girls. They call me a lot of names. They hurt me. Not as bad as they call me names...er... they make

rumours..... I tell the teachers if they do something –but they...um...they still do it again.” (27-30)

**Carl:** “They can even get told off by the headteacher and still they carry on.” (31-32)

**Carl:** “My class were the ones that was mainly horrible to me.” (51-52)

**Carl:** “No one is horrible to me in class because of the teacher, obviously. They're too scared to do it. Some are not. Some are proper, like, bullies. I'm scared a bit.” (337-338)

Here another student comments on the effect bullying has on her:

**Irene:** “Usually it goes successful with dealing with it (Yes) but at the time, when it's happening, it's frustrating and it really like...yeah...it really pulls you down. Like suddenly you've get a lot of weights on your shoulders and you're thinking, 'Oh, yeah, you'll have to deal with that' - so then you have to tell someone about it.” (294-297)

## **Personal responses**

There is an interesting difference in the presentation and analysis of the data between the 2002 investigation (RNID, 2002) and this present investigation. The 2002 investigation reports in detail 'what the pupils say' but has less to report on the more active contribution that the students make toward their personal experience of the classroom. It is within this context that the third research question is posed – 'How far can deaf students participate in and shape their school experience?'

## **Insight**

*“...I think it's also because I'm quite a shy person, like deep down. I actually act really confident. But deep down I'm quite shy.”*

**(Faith: 381-382)**



This student has shared her feelings about herself in a thoughtful and reflective way. She is clearly not a passive recipient of classroom experiences and she is aware that her own behaviour is influential in determining how she experiences the classroom.

There is evidence in the current study that the participants show insight into their own strengths and weaknesses as learners and they are willing to share their insights when they are encouraged to do so. The deaf students in this study show awareness that they have specific difficulties which may be directly related to their deafness and which may act as a barrier to their learning in the classroom,

In what follows, the student shows insight into the demands that might be made in different subject areas, in this instance, Religious Education:

**John:** "Um....I find RE quite difficult because sometimes they've got old language and you... you have to kind of translate it without any help. That's quite hard to sort of ...at first you find it harder but then as you get into it more, it's easier. First it is hard but apart from that...That's probably the hardest lesson."

*Apart from that, you find it hard because of the language?*

"Yes, because you have to sort of translate the language, like language from the Bible, like stuff to translate into English."

(527-535)

One student shows insight into the limitations of what can be achieved in the school environment and the need to explain and come to terms with the unwelcome behaviour of other people:

**Irene:** "People at school – you get a variety of people just around you...um...um... boys in particular are more challenging to deal with."

*Why?*

"Because like I said their behaviour and that is transitional – going through being a child to an adult in mind and situations."

Er...and they can be a bit immature, like...they go...like... if I'm talking, they might just go 'UGH' like they might be taking the mickey about...out of my speech."

*How often do they do that? And is it actually a problem?*

"It's like in the corridor, like when I'm walking to the class."

*OK, so not when the teachers are there?*

"No and that's really quite frustrating when it happens. And then like I tell a teacher but they don't...like...they believe me, but they don't do a lot to solve it."

*What would you like them to do?*

"Like have a word with them. But I just know that wouldn't be enough."

*Why?*

"Because...um...there's nothing really that much that you can do about people's like minds, like how they behave in a certain way. I suppose you could but it would just take a lot of energy to just do that." (264-288)

Another skill is to approach the problem analytically and offer explanations that are of comfort to oneself. Irene shows considerable insight and anticipation of the future:

**Irene:** "...as I'm going into Year 10, people will soon start to change because...um...because as you go on you start changing?

*How do you change?*

Like you change like in your behaviour—in how you think about things. You are more like adult-like in your brain...and you're ...because now you are...like...going into that transition...like

from being like a child into an adulthood stage. So, yeah." (40-47)

Students demonstrate their capacity for analytical thinking about their thoughts and feelings in relation to their learning:

**John:** "(If worried) I would try and deal with it, like, I would...I'd tell someone that I knew wouldn't go rushing into things, wouldn't go doing this and doing that. I'd sort of tell someone I can trust." (640-642)

**Bryan:** "I think lessons should be like a little bit more fun than they sometimes are, because then you want to actually learn about it." (4-5)

**Bryan:** (re difficult lessons) "Maths- except that's not, like, listening problems; that's just that I'm not very good." (186-187)

**Gemma:** "I just find it (Maths) very confusing. Because...um...I find English really good because it's like...you speak English every single day so it's much easier. But you don't really like, speak Maths every day so you just do it when you need to like.....Like if she said write a para about something - there's loads of different ways, but in Maths, if they said...um...divide something, then you have to divide, you can't like be free." (125-127, 130-132)

Gaining insight into an understanding both of oneself as a person and oneself as a deaf person can offset the impact of everyday challenges which result from deafness. It means that events can be anticipated and suitable adjustments made to avoid negative feelings:

**Faith:** "there are times when actually, yes, you do need those little allowances." (154-155)

**Debra:** "It's good to have someone there helping you but it's like, you can't...they won't be there when you, like, leave school

and everything so you have to work things out for yourself."  
(204-206)

**Irene:** "...they can just go, 'Oh you've always got a teaching assistant with you— why can't I have one?' and then you kind of think, well, I've kind of...like...got a Statement for it and like they haven't. And like, I need a bit more help than they do and so that works." (448-451)

**Gemma:** "I always have a big smile on my face.

*..... Do you do that naturally or do you sometimes think about it?*

Well ...um...I guess I don't really think – OK now I'll smile but...um...like, I just like people who smile all the time. (502-507)

It's weird because, like I know some people who don't smile but I still like the same sort of person as me but they like smile inside but they don't do it naturally. They do it when they're laughing like...but it's just their way of...but they don't act to smile a lot but they are still the same sort of person that smiles." (522-525)

Here, the student reflects on their need to have necessary extra support as a deaf student without being made to feel that the extra support gives them an unfair advantage when compared to their peers:

**John:** "Um...well basically, being me and being deaf, basically sometimes the teachers they treat you differently to the other students – not in a bad way- but they give you like...um...they treat you better, because I want to be treated the same as everyone else. (OK) I don't want to have an advantage or anything."(12-15)

For some students, thinking about the future with regard to their deafness is a matter of concern to them. These two students reflected on their future with regard to their deafness. John is optimistic about the future but Carl's prognosis is of concern to him:

**John:** "Just because I'm a little deaf now, doesn't mean that I will become completely deaf when I'm older.....they think you can't hear at all." (347-349)

**Carl:** "cos my hearing has gone down dramatically in the past five years..... It does go down very big which means that I could be deaf in another five years." (164-166)

The following extracts point to a high level of social and emotional intelligence of these students. They understand that other people can have a different perspective from their own:

**Alicia:** "my mum – she speaks quick when she's talking to her friends but because she knows I'm deaf, she sometimes speaks clearly and slowly." (298-299)

**John:** "...it kind of gets annoying when little kids at a theme park or something say 'What's that in your ear?' I'm like, "It helps me hear better" and sometimes... they're not all like that. It's just that sometimes they don't get it and they just seem to stare." (391-393)

**Irene:** (*Are you the only deaf child in the school?*) "No, there is one boy who is going into Year 8 but he is only partially deaf so he wouldn't experience what I am, like, going through because I'm moderate to severe in deafness." (341-345)

One student reflects on times when they have forgotten their deafness, only to be reminded of it:

**John:** "Well sometimes it's easy to forget because people are sometimes more deaf than me. But sometimes people can remind you. They can say, 'Oh, do you want help with that hearing aid?' – they can just remind you so much –because sometimes you can be lost in everyone treating you like a normal person –you can just completely forget. But sometimes, it can just be.... if a teacher asks like, 'Do you want help?' like

because I'm deaf- it can just bring it back and you can think, ' Oh, that's me. I'm John and I'm deaf.'" (323-329)

These students expressed the view that their deafness caused them to be particularly sensitive to other people's reactions and feelings:

**Gemma:** "Because I'm deaf, I look a lot at other people's reactions and stuff and I can sometimes tell whether...like...they're sad or upset or whether they are angry or frustrated. I find I can tell that sort of thing." (533-535)

**Alicia:** "Well I'm listening with my hearing aids and sometimes I'm looking in your mouth and sometimes looking at your eyes." (252-253)

One student made practical suggestions, based on their insights into how things could be improved for deaf students:

**Debra:** "I think that they should let the deaf child choose where they want to sit and then put people around them and then they'd know where to sit." (87-89)

**Debra:** "It's like sometimes you should encourage people to work together because it helps them communicate and for deaf children, it helps them to try and hear with other people doing it—so it improves hearing." (10-12)

The insight that Debra illustrates by her comment is impressive. She is making practical suggestions on ways in which the needs of deaf students might be met and she does so from the perspective of a person who has personal experience of the ways in which group work may help to improve hearing.

### **Anxiety**

*"I tend to get a bit anxious because I'm worried now that I can't do the work 'cos I don't understand what the teacher's just said and it goes in a vicious cycle- I give up, I can't do the work." (Faith:113)*

The participants are clearly aware of their feelings when they are in the classroom and in particular they describe feeling anxious.

The students are aware that in ensuring that they can hear effectively in class, they need to draw attention to themselves and their needs. However, in doing so they risk becoming more anxious:

**John:** "When I gave the teacher that thing (radio aid)..... it felt like everyone's eyes were on you. And it felt like embarrassing in a way because you felt like the only person in the world that had to do that because I was like one of the only people that was deaf in my primary school and now I'm in a senior school." (380-384)

**Faith:** "... It's quite difficult when you get there late, 'cos I have a teacher of the deaf I see, like and one lesson I turned up late and..... she (the teacher) had already started the lesson and everyone else was sat down..... I did not have time to give her the radio aid so I missed the majority of the lesson 'cos it was too embarrassing to get it out and give it to her in front of the whole class." (15-20)

**Faith:** "It can be quite embarrassing, putting your hand up in front of 29 other students and saying, 'Actually, miss, I don't understand what you have just said. Can you say that again?' I just keep quiet and I don't say anything until the end of the lesson." (103-106)

What appear to be straightforward interactions with other people have led to raised anxiety for these deaf students. Knowing that someone is deaf can result in a reticence to communicate, both on the part of the deaf students and others:

**Faith:** "Some people feel they cannot talk to me and then I think I'm a bit shy to talk to them, in case they are a bit offish with me." (376-377)

**Irene:** "Sometimes I can get really nervous - with people; and I can just like...I might look really relaxed but I'm, like, nervous on the inside. And so that can stop me sometimes from speaking."  
(109-111)

**Faith:** "I think if I approach someone, that they'll judge me for...in a sense...being deaf." (386)

Anxiety is sometimes discussed in relation to school work. Here the difficulty is caused by the behaviour of others; in the first case a peer group, and in the second the teacher, are spoiling the learning opportunities:

**Alicia:** "... boys at my table especially are talking at the table and that is stopping me from doing my work.....I feel quite stressed and disappointed..." (108-110)

**Faith:** "I didn't like the fact that he (the teacher) was playing music and that he needed to slow down a little bit when he was explaining. The other frustrating thing was, he wasn't only quick, he made jokes in the lesson, so he went off topic at some times- and then it was difficult to focus on the topic 'cos he was going off on a rant and I just got a bit frustrated." (174-178)

Not being able to hear satisfactorily can lead to stress:

**Alicia:** "They (lessons) are quite easy at times but it can be quite hard to make it like trying to work on the next level." (149-150)

In some circumstances the students recognise that the anxiety is internally generated and relates directly to the way the students react to the demands of the school curriculum:

**Bryan:** "In like my French test, I couldn't think of ...like some of the translations for some of the words, so I needed more time to think about it. It's sort of...like... panicked me." (28-29, 33)



**Faith:** "I get tired really easily at the end of the day; it's quite stressful trying to do five pages of maths." (180-181)

**Carl:** "I just lose concentration, completely forget what I'm doing... it's not nice. I do want to get the work done so I know that it's dumb and that....." (290)

**Faith:** "I do get a bit anxious in lessons sometimes. I think that's due to the fact that I'm worrying about not doing it right, because I can be a bit of a perfectionist. (Yes) Then I worry about 'Am I doing the right work? Am I doing the right thing? Have I heard it right?' (196-199)

These students describe their feelings at the end of a school day:

**Alicia:** "It's because it's a long day.....and I'm like.....'Oh I need to go home now. Can't...My brains tired. I've got a headache now because I'm hearing too hard.'" (365,367-368)

**Faith:** "it can be so tiring, trying to listen to the teacher all the time." (96)

The evidence from the interviews suggests that the participants are aware of and are able to describe those issues which are significant in determining the quality of their experience of the classroom. They experience and can describe insightfully their fluctuating levels of anxiety.

There is no evidence from the interviews that the students see themselves as in a failing situation from an educational perspective. They are clearly facing everyday challenges, but they are seen to be coping at a level which is sufficient for them to attend school regularly and to make educational progress, such that their school placement is not an issue.

The interviews provide evidence that the students are aware that in many situations they are having to cope and they adopt coping strategies which they are able to describe. This constitutes another theme, that of coping.

## Coping

*"Like suddenly you've got a lot of weights on your shoulders and you're thinking, 'Oh, yeah, you'll have to deal with that'." (Irene: 296-297)*

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) defined coping as:

'Constantly changing cognitive and behavioural efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person.'  
(Lazarus and Folkman, 1984, p. 118)

Students sometimes cope by 'withdrawing' psychologically from the immediate demands of the classroom:

**Carl:** "In my school, there's lots of displays in the classroom. Or....there's not a lot, but quite a few windows in there and I either stare out of the windows... daydreaming... not exactly daydreaming, just gazing out of the windows, looking, not concentrating on what I am doing or I'd look at something in the room that looks eye-catching to me and then I stare at it ...for the whole lesson. I don't get any work done and then I can't do anything..." (279-284)

**Irene:** "It makes me feel frustrated... um... I kind of just like... just fade out a bit of the lesson 'cos it's just too much."

*So when you're 'fading out,' (Yeah) what's going on?*

"It's kind of like...er... well, what's going on is...it's like I'm just sitting there and then I just have to get my water bottle out and have a drink of it and then think, just think a bit, just take that minute away from that atmosphere and then go back into it and then just take it easy and also to tell the teacher what's happening and then they'll take it into account." (204-213)

**Carl:** "...and I'm all floppy- just don't care what's happening, like that - I've fallen asleep or at least pretending to fall asleep."  
(250-251)

For one student, a physical withdrawal helps them to cope:

**Faith:** "I find it easier to go out of class when we are doing group work." (45)

One student in the pilot study reflected on the way in which their deafness led to withdrawal:

**Xavier:** "That's the biggest thing. It's humiliation. It's all to do with my deafness. Alright, if you were deaf, people would assume, that is just...well...you can't hear very well but does it mean you can't get on with people? No. If you can't hear well, lots of things add to it and it changes that person and it means that person can only hold so much feelings and emotions on the inside before he expresses, before something happens, he flips or he does something...and mine – I just used to isolate myself and not want to be with people." (331-337)

A reference to daydreaming, as a strategy for coping, also arose in the pilot study:

**Zena:** "The teacher always faced the board. If they did face us, they wouldn't really look at me...um...so during that time, I wasn't really learning because I can't understand him. I would daydream. Then they'd tell me off." (88-90)

Here the student describes a problem-solving approach to coping in a potentially overwhelming classroom situation:

**Faith:** "They have recently become more aware, like I've had to tell them, 'Actually, No, I don't understand what you are saying sometimes.' So they are trying to think of strategies to let them know without it being embarrassing. So like just writing it down on a piece of paper, and leaving a piece of paper there for them to see and then they'll come over and have a word or... waiting until everyone else starts their work and then going up and asking them... or just simple little things like that. Or going

before the lesson, if you think you're struggling a bit with that topic. They'd say to us 'OK, well go at break.'" (117-124)

This student shows insight followed by what for him appears to be an effective coping strategy:

**John:** "Um ...well sometimes you could ask the teacher if... um...like sometimes you could just say, 'Oh, Can you repeat that please?' Or...um...'What do you mean?' You can just ask them ...."

*What if it's another student?*

"Yes, if it's another student, you can ask them still to repeat it."

*Will they do that?*

"Sometimes, because sometimes it's like if you walk into a room and you forgot what you came for and it's like that and sometimes they do forget- some seconds after and still...Loads of people do that. So sometimes you can just remind them, 'Oh that question that you said a few seconds ago', and 'Oh Yes' and then you say 'Oh, can you repeat it for me?' And then they will." (163-177)

Another student referred to a coping strategy which did not rely on cooperation from someone else but enabled her to address an issue herself:

**Alicia:** "I have this...like planner and I write what the word I don't understand and I go home and I go in the dictionary (Yes) and find out what that word means and I use it the next day..." (585-587)

A construct which is related to coping, but is distinct from it, is that of resilience. Coping refers to 'a wide set of skills and purposeful responses to stress, whereas resilience refers to positive adaptation in response to serious adversity. (Glennie, 2010, p.169)

## Resilience

*"Um....Not everyone likes you. They're just like... someone goes up to me and says like... goes like, 'Oh you're different and that's just like whatever. I don't really care what you think. I do have other friends and..."*

*(Debra:286)*

Resilience has been defined by Joseph (1994) as the ability of an individual to overcome-rather than surrender to- life's challenges.

Here the student is sufficiently resilient to rebuff the unkindness of her peers:

**Debra:** "Well. 'Cos I'm deaf I can't speak properly and that then comes from people like copying my voice. I'm just like, 'Well I can't help it, can I, because I'm deaf. How would you like it if I did that? You wouldn't really?'

And um...also....with my hair...'cos...saying... 'you have nits in your hair, .....' or something like that.

"No, I do wash ....".

*(Laugh) why do they say that?*

I do wash my hair. I'm not like.... I'm not dirty like that. My mum is a cleaner. We do have a clean house." (360-369)

The same student has a robust reason for continuing to be motivated and to continue in her present educational placement:

**Debra:** "I think that in some schools they have special needs rooms.....for like... whole classes for special needs kids like deaf people, um...people like dyslexic, learning difficulties kind of thing. And I find that you shouldn't really do that like all the time 'cos they need to learn how to do stuff by yourself, like I said earlier, and personally I think that it is a bit stupid because like , when we go out in the world, no one is going to help them." (440-445)

The ability to rise to a challenge is a feature of students who are resilient.

This extract describes the student's reaction to events occurring in the transition and the consequent changes in moving from primary school to secondary school:

**John:** "I mean, my parents said because I did find work a bit hard at primary school, they said when you go to senior school, you can have a sudden shock with homework and then they were amazed at how well I got on with it. So I mean because when I put my head down and I listen to the teacher, when I'm not mucking around in class, not focusing, like in Spanish I don't get it but then that was because I wasn't listening properly. But after I used the radio aid and I listened more, I got it because I was starting to focus and I did better in languages and I'm starting to do better in languages now." (478-484)

The same student describes his preference for self-reliance:

*Do you say to your Mum and Dad if you are worried about things?*

**John:** "Not always, because they can be like...um.... they can be –as I say if someone has been mean to me at school, they would go straight in, demanding to see the parents and that. They're way too forward for me, they're way too somethings (sic)... they'll be a bit too..."

*So you're worried about something, I understand that. (Yes)  
What would you do?*

"I would try and deal with it, like, I would...I'd tell someone that I knew wouldn't go rushing into things, wouldn't go doing this and doing that. I'd sort of tell someone I can trust."

*Are you good at sorting yourself out?*

"Yes."

*You're good at solving your own problems?*

"Yes, quite a lot of the time. Quite a lot of the time, I um...mm...I just sit and think – if I just sit back and think about what I'm doing and then go into it, then I'll have...if I just think about the problem." (630-651)

Some of the students demonstrated that they could be assertive when they perceive themselves to be treated unfairly by others:

**Debra:** "You need to speak properly to me and you've just got to live with it 'cos it's not my fault I'm deaf, is it? OK?" (111-112)

**Zena:** "And it's like, 'Well, have common sense, I'm deaf. I need to lip-read. So therefore look at me.'" (119-121)

Some of the participants voiced their ability to 'brush off' or ignore potentially hurtful remarks or behaviour:

**Faith:** "I think I've been really lucky as a deaf person. I...you do hear stories about the deaf being bullied but I do get the occasional tease, but I just brush it off." (394-395)

**Carl:** (re-bullying) "...not very happy but I do try and keep my hopes up and I try and forget about it if I can." (355-356)

**Debra:** With bullying it's like... if you don't like a person, why bother going up to them. That's the question I've always asked inside. Well if they don't like me, why should I care? Why should I care what they think 'cos they don't like me. Why should I even look at them? It's just like if they keep coming up to me and they don't like me, it's just like 'What are you doing? I don't really want to be around you.'" (325-330)

This student shows resilience in that he does not blame himself for the fact he has not heard what was said on a video. He is requesting subtitles, but speculates on the fact that others have not heard either:

**John:** "I say um...' I didn't hear it and.....the volume is so low that I don't think that many other people.....heard it either...so." (204-205)

## Reflections

The interviews which provide the data analysed in this chapter, together with the three pilot study interviews, extended over thirteen hours. The participants had things to say which reflected their experience of their classrooms. The students were sufficiently articulate and insightful to provide serious and reflective data. They were all sufficiently motivated to keep talking and there was no evidence that they were overawed by what they were asked to do.

It was quite clear that the interviews had a natural end point and that what had been offered was as much as could be contributed on the occasion of the interview. The pilot study suggested that one interview was sufficient to provide a rich source of data.

What now follows is a discussion of the results of this analysis and its implications for deaf students in mainstream classrooms both from a personal perspective and from the perspective of providing a suitable environment for academic progress to be optimised.



## **CHAPTER 5      Discussion**

### **Introduction**

The findings from this investigation which relate to classroom and learning experiences are based exclusively on the individual interviews conducted with the students. This was a deliberate choice on the part of the investigator. It is the voice of the student that has been given priority over all the other voices, of teachers, parents, and teachers of the deaf, which feature in other investigations (Yun et al., 2001; Warner-Czyz et al., 2009; Cefai and Cooper, 2010)

An important aim of the current study is to 'turn up the volume' of the student voice (Exley, 2014, p.1). Whether issues are addressed at the individual, local or national level, it is the implications for the student in the classroom that is ultimately the focus. Specific examples from the data will be included in this discussion to emphasize further the links between what the students contributed and the themes that are consequently raised, including the relationships between the students, their teachers and their peers and specific issues as noise and bullying.

The participants generously provided a wealth of information during the interviews and this discussion is aimed at presenting this data in a manner that truly reflects the participants' points of view. However, it is recognised that the environment of the classroom is influenced by national politics, local authority policies, and the ethos created by the school staff, governors and by the population of students who attend the school. In discussing the findings, recognition of this wider context provides further insights into what the students experience. The fact that the students are deaf contributes an additional dimension to all these influences.

Another important consideration is that no matter how far the 'voice of the student' is given prominence, my own position as a listener to those voices must be recognised. I am an older professional person who is seeking to capture the authentic voice of adolescent students in a particular context, a discussion in their own homes. I need to be aware of the potential power imbalance between me as a researcher with my own

biases and experiences (Cook- Sather, 2006; Grover, 2004; Phelan and Kinsella, 2013) and the students, as I endeavour to interpret what the data tells us about their everyday experiences in the classroom.

### **Previous research**

There have been few attempts to elicit the direct views of deaf students in mainstream schools but in 2002, Iantaffi et al., in cooperation with the Royal National Institute for the Deaf (RNID) conducted a large scale investigation to which reference has been made in the Literature Review. It has been noted that, as with the current study, the researchers set out with the proposition that the students involved were experts in providing information about their own classroom experiences and that therefore the data collected provided a useful insight into key issues which arise when deaf pupils are included in mainstream settings. The researchers noted the enthusiasm with which the pupils they interviewed were willing to share their views, an observation which was replicated in my own research.

The RNID research (2002) identified a number of issues regarding mainstream placements for deaf pupils and highlighted communication difficulties as a particular area of concern. The researchers also observed that there was little robust research evidence to demonstrate whether inclusion does or does not confer the academic benefits expected for this population.

The 2002 researchers (RNID, 2002) arrived at a strongly worded statement relating to the participants in their investigation and their ability to voice their own descriptions of their daily life in their classrooms. They stated that:

'One thing that the research team is firmly convinced of is that listening to the pupils' voices can provide educators with powerful insights into their experiences and that pupils can and should be involved in their own education, if inclusion is to be successful both at academic and social levels.' (Iantaffi et al., 2003, p.156.)

They concluded that the students should be involved in decisions about their own education at both the social and academic levels. My own research echoes the earlier study to some extent although it differs from it in significant ways

### **Normalisation**

In my current study, Faith is explicit in her wish to be like everybody else and what this means to her:

**Faith:** "...you just want to be the same as everyone else - not having to wear a radio aid, not having to have a TA." (teaching assistant) (241-243).

The students in this investigation do not identify themselves in the interviews as being 'deaf people.' What they want is to be regarded as 'normal' people who happen to be deaf. The wish to be seen as 'normal' is a constant theme that is referred to often in this discussion.

Wolfensberger (2011) has attempted to clarify the principle of normalisation, although he cautions that:

'any review of the literature will disclose that once people see the term normalisation a large proportion (apparently even the vast majority) assume, usually wrongly, that they know what it means.' (Wolfensberger, 2011, p. 435)

Faith identifies herself with a target group (Morse et al., 2000) that is, the other students in her class. As has been noted above, she articulates a wish to fit in with the target group and she identifies what makes her different from the target group - the radio aid and the teaching assistant (242-243).

Wolfensberger (1980) suggests that the highest goal of normalisation is -

'the establishment, enhancement or defense of the social role(s) of a person or group, via the enhancement of people's social images and personal competencies.' (Wolfensburger, 1980, p. 435)

This clarification would certainly resonate with Faith's aspiration to be seen by herself and other students as 'normal'. She does not regard the radio aid or the teaching assistance as positive contributions to her social image or personal competence.

Faith's classroom teacher, who insisted he would treat her as 'normal' and make no allowances for her deafness, misses the point, which Faith clearly understands, that:

**Faith:** "...there are times when actually, yes, you do need those little allowances." (154-155).

What Faith appreciates is that, if she is to be 'normal', she does not expect her deafness to be ignored. While she understands that the radio aid and the teaching assistance in some ways create a difficulty for her, she is aware that being treated differently may on occasions enable her to be 'normal.'

The centrality of the principle of normalisation is emphasised by Bradshaw and Carnaby (2002) who assert that:

'The principle of normalisation underpins the majority of learning disability services within the statutory and voluntary sectors.'  
(Bradshaw and Carnaby, 2002, p. 298)

While normalisation may play this pivotal role, the tension that results from differing understandings of what it means to be 'normal' emerges throughout the students' comments and is reflected in this discussion.

The participants in this investigation are aware that being like everybody else may be open to a different interpretation by hearing students. John is confronted by hearing students who expect him to sign. He has to explain to other students who ask him if he signs:

**John:** "...they say 'Can you sign?' and I say 'Oh not that much. I can sign a few basic words.' (Mm) And they say, 'that's...that's...' 'Oh I get that now.'"(339-340)

There is no evidence in the data that the participants in this investigation regarded themselves as belonging to a separate culture, that is the Deaf culture described with an upper case D (Skelton and Valentine, 2003), or that they used signing as a significant means of communicating in school. In the past, much has been made of the divergent views of those deaf people who regard themselves as belonging to a distinct culture with its own mores and language, namely sign language, and those who wish to be associated with their hearing peers. The students in this investigation wish to relate primarily to the other students in their class at school.

To return to Faith's view of 'normality', what she requests is not having to wear a radio aid and not having to have a teaching assistant, because these identify her as different. These features also connect deafness with a medical condition (Munoz-Baell and Ruiz, 2000). The use of radio aids and teaching assistants is related to an approach to normalisation that postulates that the consequences of deafness in the classroom can be minimised, possibly to the point of ceasing to matter, by the use of extra adult support and of technology. However, radio aids and teaching assistants are reminders to the students of their deafness.

This constant tension between identifying oneself as 'normal' and then realising one is deaf is captured by John:

**John:** "Well sometimes it's easy to forget because people are sometimes more deaf than me. But sometimes people can remind you. They can say, 'Oh, do you want help with that hearing aid?' – they can just remind you so much –because sometimes you can be lost in everyone treating you like a normal person –you can just completely forget. But sometimes, it can just be.... if a teacher asks like 'Do you want help' like because I'm deaf- it can just bring it back and you can think ' Oh, that's me. I'm John and I'm deaf.'" (323-329)

The tension between John being treated 'as a normal person' and John acknowledging, "Oh that's me. I'm John and I'm deaf ", not only highlights John as a student in his class but relates to wider issues of how John's

school, the local authority and central Government policy might relate to him. It is John's teacher, in making a seemingly kind offer of help with his hearing aid, who triggers John's response. John does not wish to identify himself as a deaf person and be regarded in this way by his teacher. He is clearly 'hearing aligned' as described by Hardy, (2010).

### **Classroom arrangements**

Hearing aids and their effective deployment, radio aids and teaching assistants are all provided with cost implications for the school and the local authority. They are all related to the student's deafness and they require the student and their families to undergo a lengthy assessment procedure before they are put in place. This process, which would be difficult to ignore, serves to highlight deafness as an audiological condition with consequences in terms of special educational needs.

For example, the reason that Faith has a teaching assistant assigned to her is that her special needs will have been identified on her Statement of Special Educational Needs. The law and the subsequent procedures to meet identified needs follow what is essentially a medical model of disability. Statements of Special Educational Need must include a section elucidating each and every one of the students' special educational needs. Then follows a section which describes a provision for each and every one of those needs (DfES, 2001, page 102, para 8:32). What this usually means in practice is that the student is given extra hours of teaching time or teaching assistant time. The teaching time may include access to a teacher of the deaf.

The rationale for such provision is that, if Faith's residual hearing is sufficiently compensated for by additional provision and if the adults in her classroom are sufficiently skilled in deaf awareness, then she can achieve some level of 'normality'.

Harrison describes succinctly how he and his teaching assistant interact:

**Harrison:** "She explains it to me and describes it so....if I don't still understand it, she describes it to me in a better way." (198-199)

Gemma has a similar experience, but she thinks it important to mention that she is not the only student who benefits from the support offered by her teaching assistant (349). The relationship between the majority of the students and their teaching assistant is described in positive terms. Alicia puts up her hand and the TA will come and talk to her (511-512), Irene comments that the TA will sit next to her if she has missed something really important and needs help (77-79) and John can say, "I didn't get it" and the TA will repeat it (102-103). The common feature in these interactions is the close relationship between the teaching assistant and the student. John observes that the teaching assistant is "nicer than his teachers" (74) and Irene notes that the teaching assistant is "always around to help you with anything" (390).

What this means in practical terms however, is that the provision is focussed on the deafness and its pathology and the extra provision is often imposed on the student who is expected to comply with the provision whether or not they have been consulted. The presence of the teaching assistant is not necessarily something that the students consider they have agreed to. Debra suggests that she would not want someone who "follows her around all day" (196) and Bryan indicates that he used a teaching assistant "slightly" when he first went to school but that he does not use her much now (357-358). Part of the reason why students might sometimes wish to distance themselves from teaching assistant support is provided by these students, who felt the teaching assistant was giving too much help and was preventing them from being the same as everyone else. Irene describes getting "too much help" and "doing the same thing over and over" (485-486) and having to enlist the support of the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO):

**Irene:** "I told the SENCO – "You need to sort something out about this and the SENCO did what she did and then...but this TA just didn't stop and I found that really frustrating." (486-488)

Faith resents having a teaching assistant sitting by her all the time in the lessons and preventing her from sitting next to her friends (250-252):

**Faith:** "I just need that space a little bit. I've asked her to move just that bit further away so that I can sit next to my friends."  
(250-252)

The experience of the students in this study echo those of the students interviewed in the RNID study (2002). The interviews provided evidence that the students particularly resent it when support staff are seen as interfering with relationships with their friends by not allowing them to sit where they want, to chat or indeed just to be off task. It is difficult for support staff to ignore behaviour which may be seen as not helping pupils' academic development, particularly when they see this as their key responsibility.

Thus it may be seen that the presence of in-class teaching assistant support is sometimes incompatible with the students' declared preference to be seen as 'normal'. The presence of the teaching assistant emphasises the differences between the deaf students and their peers and can interfere with the students' classroom experience by making peer to peer engagement more difficult.

Although the involvement of the teacher of the deaf may be included on the Statement of Special Educational Needs, the participants in this investigation make only passing reference to this resource:

**Alicia:** "The lady that comes –I'm not sure what she is but she works for a deaf impaired society and she sees children that are like me –and knows what's going on - like, 'How's your hearing aids? Are they working?'" (461-463)

Similarly, in the RNID investigation, the pupils were not seen to have a close rapport with the teacher of the deaf and commented very little on this role (RNID, 2002 p. 50).

Classroom teachers are integral to the everyday world of the classroom and are available to all the students whereas a teaching assistant is



present in the classroom only because the student's Statement describes their deafness. The manner in which the students communicate with their teachers and their peers is pivotal in discussing their everyday classroom experience. What the students in this study are seeking is not unusual and additional support, but the opportunity to communicate with their teachers like everyone else in the class. They wish to become 'members' of their class (Antia et al., 2002). In discussing deaf and hard of hearing students in inclusive settings, Antia et al. (2002) uses the term 'membership'. They suggest that in order for students to become full members of their classes, provision, while needing to be based on placement and communication issues, also needs to include programmes that address:

'teacher attitudes, teacher rules and relationships, student knowledge and the curriculum, structural barriers, extracurricular activities, community relationships and parental support.' (Antia et al., 2002, p. 214)

They argue that full membership of the school community implies that all students are accepted and valued by the school and that their unique needs are met within the classroom and school community. The theoretical model that is being used here is a social model. It is not the students' deafness that creates difficulties but the failure of society to make suitable provision to ameliorate its effects.

### **Teacher-student interaction**

The data provides evidence that attempts at interactive dialogue in class between the students and their teachers may prove problematic. It is instructive to read Yusuf's account of his attempt to enter into dialogue with his mainstream teacher:

**Yusuf:** "But the teacher he was like 'Are you deaf?' I went 'Yes' and he went 'You have to sit in the front row.' And I was like 'I don't want to because in the front row you're too close and I can't exactly look up the whole time to look at your mouth' –so I

preferred it in the second row and then the teacher would be like

'No, no, no, you have to sit in the front row.'" (273-277)

The consequence for Yusuf was not trivial, since he was not able to negotiate with his teacher and he was disadvantaged for the rest of the year in this lesson. The lack of communication is seen to be not so much directly related to Yusuf's deafness, but to the individual teacher's level of insight and willingness to enter into the world of the deaf student.

According to Bradshaw and Carnaby(2002), communication involves:

'exchanging ideas and interpreting meanings and is in essence, a two-way process whereby each person involved in the exchange will influence the interaction taking place.'  
(Bradshaw and Carnaby, 2002, p. 299)

There are other examples in the data from the current study of a failure on the part of the teacher to enter into a meaningful dialogue with the deaf student. Debra was disadvantaged in class because no one had thought to communicate with her before deciding where she should sit in class. She had chosen to sit in the middle of the classroom but was moved to the side:

**Debra:** "when I was in the middle, I could look straight ahead and had to like twist and turn... and I think they just did it without even asking me, assuming that I'd agree to it but I didn't really find it helped much." (77-79)

In a similar vein, Irene found herself unable to communicate because of her French teacher who "shouts constantly" (182-185). Debra was placed in a class with a teacher who himself had a "speech thing" and she comments:

**Debra:** "it didn't really occur to them that like...I might not always hear..." (178-179).

In the 2002 investigation (RNID, 2002), the students reported a number of instances where their mainstream teachers demonstrated a lack of understanding of their needs, including examples of teachers asking

them to remove radio hearing aids 'on the assumption that' they were music systems (Jarvis, 2003, p.165). As in the current study, the students were more complimentary when discussing teachers who employed strategies that gave them greater access to the lessons.

The deaf students in the current study are reliant on technology in the classroom to facilitate interactive dialogue with their teachers. The technology is essentially straightforward. The teacher and the student wear microphones and the student has an amplification system with ear phones. With commendable sensitivity, Irene has to explain to her teacher that the necklace she is wearing is rattling against the microphone and preventing her from hearing what is being said. As Irene put it,

**Irene:** "Please can you take off all your jewellery? I'm not saying it doesn't look nice on you. It's just that it does affect how I can hear you." (164-165)

Alicia describes a similar situation where she has to ask the teacher to switch off the microphone when she is engaged in private conversations, because otherwise the teacher can be overheard (217-218). Edward also recognises the potential for embarrassment and takes the initiative:

**Edward:** ".....well if the teacher has to go outside and talk to the other teacher in private, then I have to press the middle button which is the mute button to switch it off. Or maybe they switch off the button on top so that they can talk to the other person, I mean to the teacher, something in private." (472-475)

The students are in the best position to know if the radio aid is being used to the optimum effect and they are prepared to be assertive in determining how the technology is used. Irene (220), Bryan (88) and Alicia (326-327) all ensure that the radio microphone is in the centre of the table so that they can hear everyone on the table.

The students found it embarrassing if they were individually selected for attention during lessons. A problem when using a radio aid system is that it is much more noticeable than hearing aids and this affects the student's

self-image at a stage in their education when they most wish to be like their peers:

**John:** "...when I gave the teacher that thing, every time I walked to give the teacher that thing, it felt like everyone's eyes were on you. And it felt, like, embarrassing in a way because you felt like the only person in the world that had to do that because I was like one of the only people that was deaf in my primary school....." (380-384)

In the RNID investigation (RNID, 2002), students reported that they would prefer not to wear their radio aids rather than produce them in front of the class which they regarded as embarrassing. (RNID, 2002, p. 77)

This view is mirrored in Faith's comment in the current study:

**Faith:** "I did not have time to give her the radio aid so I missed the majority of the lesson 'cos it was too embarrassing to get it out and give it to her in front

## **Friends**

In the RNID investigation (RNID, 2002), deaf pupils make more statements about friends than on any other topic. Similarly, the students in this investigation acknowledge that, for them, part of being 'normal' is that they have meaningful friendships. Harrison articulates succinctly what having a friend means to him:

**Harrison:** "they're kind and helpful... they always do stuff for me. They're always there for me." (353-354)

The crucial role that friends play in their classroom experience and the support that good friends can offer is identified by a number of participants. With their friends, the students are able to communicate with a purpose. They understand friendships in terms of support. Irene shares with her friends those times when she is having "a hard time with her deafness" (314). Carl (375) and Edward (388) like to be with their friends because they are "funny" and "cheerful." Irene values her friends because

they “treat me like if I’m not deaf”, (506) and John indicates that his friends:

**John:** “...put that I’m deaf aside and they treat me normally.”  
(241-242)

The discussion of friendships highlights the fact that the participants in this investigation do not have day-to-day contact with other deaf students in their schools. Since they are usually the only deaf student in their school, associating with other deaf students does not play a significant part in their school life. Faith, who unusually has another deaf student in her school, makes the point:

**Faith:** “...the only thing we have in common is the fact that we’re deaf.” (350)

However, Faith does indicate that she has deaf friends out of school and she feels much more confident with them than she does with hearing people. There is an interesting juxtaposition of comments here, especially where Faith is making the distinction between deaf and hearing people. When asked why she feels more confident with her deaf friends, Faith returns to the question of ‘normality’. She is of the opinion that other deaf students:

**Faith:** “know where you are coming from

*Which is?*

That you like being the same as everyone else.” (452-456)

Irene (338) and Debra (494-545) have established friendships with other deaf students who live away from them. They talk over the internet and Debra meets other deaf students in a deaf club once a month. The use of the internet by deaf children has been investigated (Barak and Sidovsky, 2008).and reflects the use that Irene and Debra have made of this means of communication.

In the current study, relationships with other students are not always described in positive terms. Faith describes some ambiguous

interchanges in which she feels teased or even bullied by her friend and she shares the observation that:

**Faith:** "It can sometimes be isolating when you can only have one or two friends, to be honest with you." (480-481)

In the interviews with the participants in the current investigation, there are accounts of bullying behaviour related directly to their deafness. Alicia describes being taunted about whether she is really as deaf as she says she is (647-653) and Debra is bullied because she 'cannot speak properly (360-362).' Carl describes a serious and ongoing problem with being bullied (249-274, 337-357).

Similarly, students in the 2002 investigation (RNID, 2002) identified bullying and teasing as an issue:

'They used to just swear at me all the time and start calling me names and stuff '(RNID, 2002, p.103)

Bauman and Pero (2011) made a study of conventional bullying and cyberbullying amongst Deaf and Hard of Hearing students in the United States. The study supports the idea that bullying may be more of an issue for deaf students than for their hearing peers but also recognises that as yet there have been few studies which have investigated this issue:

'There is almost no empirical data on bullying (and none on cyberbullying) among Deaf/HOH students, so this article provides a starting point for further investigations. It provides evidence that both forms of bullying are problems for this population, perhaps more so than for their hearing peers.'  
(Bauman and Pero, 2011, pp. 250-251)

### **The acoustic environment**

A recent investigation, (Connolly et al., 2013), asked a group of adolescents about their school's acoustic environment, and concluded that they were 'reliable judges' in relation to noise in their classrooms.

In the current study, there is frequent reference in the data to the communication difficulties that arise from noise in the classroom. In the literature on deafness, noise is a recurring theme (Bess, 1999; Yun et al., 2001).

Alicia finds it very noisy in classrooms, so even when her teachers are sitting next to her, she has to look at them (240-241). Faith (102-103) and Gemma (18-19) refer to the number of students in the class, thirty, and how it becomes too loud for them if they are all "talking at once." Eight of the ten students in the current study commented specifically on the problem of noise in the classroom. The problem created by noise in the classroom also featured prominently in the RNID investigation (RNID, 2002).

Noise can originate from many sources in the classroom including talking, shuffling feet, paper noise, ventilation and heating systems. It is well established that the ambient noise and reverberation times in classrooms are too high (Bess, 1999) and the consequent signal to noise ratio leads to the difficulties that the students describe. The problem of noise is made worse by the fact that students with hearing loss exhibit greater difficulty in understanding speech than hearing students in the same physical environment (Bess, 1999). John describes how noise is a particular problem for him:

**John:** "...if people are talking and constantly like messing around and making rude noises so that really you can't hear the teacher. No one can hear the teacher so it makes it even harder for me." (116-118)

Noise can also prevent the students from engaging in individual work. Harrison observes:

**Harrison:** "I can't concentrate on my work and...I can't understand the teacher." (521)

Bryan comments on noise being a problem for him, even in tests:

**Bryan:** "Like, say, there's like noise like in a test... like too much noise during a test, then I'd find it difficult to concentrate." (18-19)

Bryan also focuses on the effect noise has on participation in whole class or group work:

**Bryan:** "Like too much noise. Say... like... when we are doing group work and there's like five or six different groups in the classroom. That would make it a bit more difficult for me to hear my own group." (68-70)

Noise is a constant feature of the classroom. Noise adds to the difficulty of communicating successfully in the classroom and may create an ever present barrier to learning and socialising. In considering the problem of noise, attention is drawn to the concept of risk in the classroom. This concept, together with the response of the students to risk needs further consideration.

### **The students' response to risk**

The data has provided evidence that, for much of the time the deaf students are in class, they are only partially offered the kind of support they indicate that they would find helpful and acceptable. The participants do not provide evidence that they can consistently interact with their teachers in a robust manner, which might to some extent put them on a par with their hearing peers. The social model assumes more interaction between the deaf students and the adults who are present in the learning environment than the participants describe. There are examples of relationships with teachers where an understanding between the teacher and the student is of benefit and enhances the learning experience. Faith describes her English teacher in such a way:

**Faith:** "My English teacher, she's very aware of how difficult it can be for me. She is... like today for example, my radio aid wasn't working very well, so I had to tell her – "Miss, it's been playing up" because it was sounding really different. And then, I



told her, and she goes 'Well, let me know if you find it difficult.'  
(193-196)

However, there appears to be little consistency. Hence the implementation of a social model is weakened by its reliance on individual teachers and on their degree of deaf awareness over which the participants have little control. It is clear that provision of the kind listed in Statements of Special Educational Needs, extra teaching assistant support and an adapted acoustical environment will not of itself guarantee a learning environment in the classroom equal to that of the deaf students' hearing peers.

The learning environment that these deaf students have described subjects them to considerable risk because of the way in which schools are structured and organised. There is a constant risk of failure to learn and communicate and of failure to establish reliable and robust relationships with their teachers, other relevant adults and their peers. This is not to argue that deafness is of itself contributing to risk but rather that deafness may interact within a specific context to create disadvantage. In order to cope with this uncertain and inconsistent environment and the risks that it presents, the contribution from the students is substantial.

The students are aware of the factors that contribute to the risks they encounter. They are also sufficiently insightful to put themselves in the context of their classrooms and to speculate on how their own personalities might be involved in creating additional risk. Faith shares the insight that she may appear confident on the outside but she regards herself as shy (381-382) and this prevents her from taking risks to approach others:

**Faith:** "I've always struggled with friendships. I think it's 'cos it's a two way system. I worry about how they will react to talking to me, whether they will feel scared to talk to me because yes, they know I'm deaf, but they do worry about 'What happens if she says that again?' I do hear very well, with my deafness I think.

So I can.... Some people feel they cannot talk to me and then I think I'm a bit shy to talk to them, in case they are a bit offish with me." (373-377)

Irene is aware that boys are more challenging for her to deal with because they are:

**Irene:** "...going through being a child to an adult in mind and situations... and they can be a bit immature". (266-267)

Further evidence of the capacity for self-reflection and analysis is provided by three students. John indicates that, if he is worried, he would not go rushing into things but try and deal with it before sharing his worry with someone he could trust (639-641). Bryan conjectures that his problem with mathematics is not a hearing problem; it is just that he is not good at maths (186-187). Gemma has sufficient insight into the challenges of mathematics to explain:

**Gemma:** "I just find it (Maths) very confusing. Because.....you speak English every single day... so it's much easier. But you don't really like speak Maths every day so you just do it when you need to." (125-127)

In order to recognise such insight and the effort that the participants make in responding to their own classroom experience, it is useful to introduce the concept of resilience.

## **Resilience**

Resilience is used to refer to:

'the factors, processes and mechanisms which, in the face of significant risk/trauma/adversity/ stress/disadvantage, nonetheless work to enable an individual, family or community to thrive and be successful.' (Young et al., 2008, p. 42)

Resilience, it is argued, while not remarkable or exceptional, can go unrecognised as far as deaf students are concerned. To characterise resilience as 'exceptional' rather than 'normal' might suggest that any

failure to thrive and be successful is a personal failure rather than an inherent risk associated with the context in which the risk arises. Young (2008) argues that deaf children are

‘typically faced with the inappropriate burden of responsibility for trying to make communication with others work.’ (Young, 2008, p.50)

After attempting to relate the extensive literature on resilience to deaf students, Young et al. (2008) found little published work relating the two. They conjectured that the explanation for the paucity of research might be that there is something ‘intrinsically problematic’ in attempting to relate the concept of resilience to deaf children. Alternatively, they consider that there may be a simpler explanation that the research was ‘yet to be undertaken.’ The authors concluded that the evidence needed to decide between the two possible explanations was ‘thin’ (Young et al., 2008, p. 42). Inasmuch as the current investigation provides clear evidence that the participants were resilient in class and were able to engage in meaningful dialogue relating to their experiences, there is no evidence to support the ‘intrinsically problematic’ suggestion. There is perhaps more reason to listen to the voice of the students and what, if given the opportunity, they are able to tell us.

Debra has contributed a clear description of her response to her interaction with a group of her peers which illustrates her resilience. In this exchange, she is subjected to an attempt at ‘othering’ (Johnson et al., 2004) by her peers, who try to establish that she is not like them:

**Debra:** “...Not everyone likes you. They’re just like...someone goes up to me and says like... goes like, ‘Oh you’re different’ and that’s just like “Whatever. I don’t really care what you think. I do have other friends and...” (282-284)

The attempt at othering escalates into suggestions by her peers that in addition to her deafness, Debra has head lice:

**Debra:** "Well. 'Cos I'm deaf, I can't speak properly and that then comes from people like copying my voice. I'm just like, "Well, I can't help it, can I, because I'm deaf. How would you like it if I did that? You wouldn't really? And um also... with my hair...'cos ...saying... " You have nits in your hair, ..." or something like that... "No, I do wash ..... "I do wash my hair. I'm not like... I'm not dirty like that. My mum is a cleaner. We do have a clean house." (360-364, 368-369).

Debra has demonstrated that she is resilient in the face of what is undoubtedly an unpleasant personal attack. She offers further insight into how robust her world view is:

**Debra:** "I think that in some schools they have special needs rooms...for like...whole classes for special needs kids like deaf people, um...people like dyslexic, learning difficulties kind of thing. And I find that you shouldn't really do that like all the time 'cos they need to learn how to do stuff by yourself, like I said earlier, and personally I think that it is a bit stupid because like, when we go out in the world, no one is going to help them." (440-445)

In essence she is making the point that "special needs kids" should not be taught in "special needs rooms" because when they "go out in the world" no one is going to help them.'

There is, in the data, frequent reflection relating to resilience. John recalls his parents being amazed at how well he coped with his transfer to secondary school:

**John:** "I mean, my parents said because I did find work a bit hard at primary school, they said when you go to senior school, you can have a sudden shock with homework and then they were amazed at how well I got on with it." (478-480)

Zena refers to common-sense when talking about her need to look in order to lip-read:

**Zena:** "They tend to look at the board and they talk looking at the board and then they turn round and go. 'There you go' and I'm 'Right, there you go what?' And then they're just like be annoyed with me because they have to repeat it. And it's like 'Well, have common sense I'm deaf. I need to lip-read. So therefore look at me.'" (117-121)

When referring to bullying, Carl indicates that while he is not happy, he is endeavouring to keep up his morale:

**Carl:** (re-bullying) "...I do try and keep my hopes up and try and forget about it if I can." (355-356)

It is clear that students were ready and willing to share their thoughts on a wide range of personal experiences relating to the classroom and to their relationships with others. Many of their comments raise issues which directly affect their learning, their interaction with others and their perceptions of themselves.

## **Conclusion**

When given the opportunity to talk about their classroom experiences, the students in this investigation responded with enthusiasm and with an appropriate sense of seriousness. There was no impression that they had rehearsed what they had to say and they were willing to reflect on their responses as they made them. The issues which have arisen from the data were not predetermined. The students were in separate schools and they were not in contact with each other. Issues such as their interactions with their teachers, friendships, communication difficulties, the use of technology, bullying and noise all arose from the interviews.

Where comparisons have been possible between the RNID (2002) investigation and the current investigation, there have been some remarkable resonances between the two data sets. In the 2002 study, students raised issues relating to the experience of a deaf student in a mainstream environment. In the current study, these issues have been explored further within a risk-resilience framework. One of the main difference between the two studies is the emphasis in the current

investigation on the element of risk that has been identified and discussed. Another difference is the extent to which the students are aware of the daily challenges they face and the extent to which they have articulated their attempts to respond to them.

The classroom, as described by the students, is an environment which presents the deaf student with ongoing risk. However, the students do not suggest that they are in a failing situation as far as their schools are concerned and this raises the question of what the students themselves contribute to further their progress in class.

The risk and resilience model is seen to be offering an alternative to the 'medical model' or the 'social model,' since it focuses on the individual deaf student, their need to be consulted for the insights they hold about themselves and the importance of involving them in decision making that may influence their right to purposeful educational experience with positive outcomes.

There are two papers which are particularly relevant to this investigation and which illustrate the ability of deaf students to contribute to their learning. Young et al. (2008) describe resilience as:

'an enticing concept which offers a positive response to the acute and/or sustained adversity, disadvantage harm and pain that deaf children may experience'. (Young et al., 2008, p.42)

And further:

'For deaf children and young people, the successful navigation of being deaf in a world that faces them with countless daily hassles and which may commonly deny, disable or exclude them, is a key definition of resilience.' (Young et al., 2008, p.52)

Jacobs (2010) gives prominence to the concept of resilience. He also relates the risk and resilience model (Wong, 2003;Reiff, 2004) to the deaf population. Jacobs describes a 'paradigm shift' where the risk and resilience model offers an alternative to the medical model with a focus

on disability and to the social model which is focused on removing the barriers to learning that society may create.

This investigation has provided evidence that supports Young et al.'s description of the daily life of a deaf student and the need for more research on resilience (Young et al., 2008). The study also supports the notion that the risk and resilience model offers a viable alternative framework for exploring the classroom experiences of deaf students and ways in which those experiences might be enhanced. It provides a lens through which classroom experience can be viewed.

Of the three models of resilience that have been described in the literature review, (Fergus and Zimmerman, 2005) the model that is particularly apt, because it is reflected in the data, is the 'challenge model'. The data provides evidence that the students are reacting daily to risk which present them with challenges to which they are making personal responses. These challenges are not usually so great that they overwhelm the student, although they may cause a temporary withdrawal, but they have sufficient impact to bring about a change in response from the student, which results in them gaining in resilience. It is this resilience that influences the outcome of the challenge in a positive direction. The 'inoculation model,' which may be regarded as a further refinement of the challenge model, recognises that repeated daily challenges can have an 'inoculating effect,' similar to the immunity that results from exposure to infection, which results in a positive outcome over time. The important implication from the perspective of the current investigation is that it is the input of the student which may result in more positive educational outcomes for their learning. Such responses to the risks they encounter need to be explicitly recognised and encouraged.

In discussing the findings, it needs to be acknowledged that this is a small scale investigation. However embedded within the data are references to important issues that relate not only to the students in their classrooms but to an understanding of the education of deaf students in a wider context both at local and national levels.

Through listening directly to the voice of the students, insights can be gained that have not been extensively described in the literature on deaf students in mainstream schooling. This research may then be seen to make a useful contribution, in that it may provide support or challenge to the body of current research and may include fresh insight into the classroom experience of deaf students and their learning.



## **CHAPTER 6      Recommendations**

The distinguishing feature of the current study is that not only is it centred on the deaf students themselves, but the evidence on which it is based has been provided entirely by the deaf students. Great care has been taken to listen to the voice of the students and to hear what they have to say.

### **Risk and resilience**

What the students have consistently described in the current study and what they described in the RNID (2002) study is the ever present risk that they face in their day-to-day classroom experience. The students may not characterise their experiences as 'risk', which is a technical term, but the concept of risk is useful in attempting to bring together and explain what the students are communicating.

If the nature of the risks that deaf students face has not been prominent in the literature on deafness, it is possibly because the students have not been provided with a suitable context in which to voice their experiences and that such risks are not fully appreciated by the professionals working with them. The evidence in the current study suggests that not all mainstream teachers have the time to listen and to hear what their deaf students are saying, and some may not be sufficiently aware of the needs of their deaf students. It is not that the students do not try to influence their teachers by telling them what they are experiencing. It is rather that the teachers are not understanding the significance of what is being said. Mainstream teachers who have deaf children in their classrooms, need to make protected time available to the students in such a way that the students feel safe voicing their concerns and can be reassured that, when they have voiced their concerns, action will follow. In this way, risks would be reduced and relationships between teachers and students would ensure better practice and a more supportive learning environment.

The risk and resilience model, which has been described in Chapter 2, addresses the concept of risk and also emphasises the response to risk

that the students demonstrate. Although the concept of resilience has been prominent in the literature for a number of years, it has not been a feature of studies with deaf students. The concept did not feature, for example, in the RNID study (2002).

A number of models of resilience have been described in the literature review. It is suggested that when students are exposed to risk, their behaviour can change, and they may become more or less resilient. This resilience in turn affects the outcome in terms of their learning and their social relationships. It is important to understand that resilience is not a trait that some students have and others do not. Rather resilience needs to be understood as a contextually dependent response to the risks that the students encounter in the environment of their classrooms. The students provide evidence in this current study that they are constantly active in responding to risk and reducing its effects on them. The compensatory and protective models (Fergus and Zimmerman, 2005) suggest that teacher intervention and parental support can alter the outcome of exposure to risk. However, the suggestion that repeated exposure to risk can have an effect similar to inoculation has much relevance for the current study. The notion is that by repeated exposure to risk, the students develop effective responses which alter the outcome for them in a positive direction in terms of their learning and social relationships.

In listening to the students, I was fully aware that they were attending their schools regularly and that they were making progress, despite the potential barriers to learning that they were describing. It is recommended that all those who are seeking to educate deaf students in mainstream classrooms should acknowledge the risks that the students are facing and recognise the contribution the students are themselves making towards their educational progress.

### **Being 'normal'**

The risk and resilience model has only recently been studied in relation to deafness (Jacobs, 2010). What the participants describe may be

interpreted as responses to a medical model of intervention. Students repeatedly make reference to the concept of 'normality'. When the students use this term, they usually mean that they wish to be seen as 'normal' students, that is, just like everybody else. They do not want to be identified by their deafness or to have their deafness made a defining feature of their education. The data reflects the tension that can arise between the students and the adults who seek to educate them in mainstream classrooms.

The thinking that is reflected in the medical model of disability is dominant in much of what is discussed in terms of deaf students and their education. For example, a considerable amount of time is spent by schools and local authorities in the administration of special educational needs provision. When I was employed as an educational psychologist in a national centre for deaf children, much of my time was spent, at the request of the parents, in providing evidence for them to negotiate extra time in the form of teaching assistants, teachers of the deaf or external professionals such as speech and language therapists. The way the extra time is negotiated is by constructing a case that the student's special educational needs are exceptional and therefore require exceptional levels of provision. There would be little to be gained in recommending that the assessment process should be changed. The momentum behind the application of the medical model is considerable, since the current Code of Practice (2014), published by both the Department for Education and the Department of Health, can be seen to reinforce the language and approaches represented by the medical model (DfE and DoH, 2014).

It is unlikely under current legislation and educational systems that mainstream schools will feel comfortable in accepting students with profound deafness into their classrooms without extra funding and/or extra adult support. Parents have a right in law to expect a mainstream placement for their children, and there may be a potential discrepancy between what parents are requesting and what schools feel comfortable in attempting to provide. On the whole, teachers in mainstream schools do

not claim to have the expertise or training needed to teach deaf children effectively and they expect to import expertise and support.

The evidence provided by the students is that there is a prevalent view within their schools that they need to be singled out in their classrooms because they are deaf. The students are directed to sit according to the instructions of their teachers and not where they would be most comfortable, they may be identified to visitors as the “deaf student in the class”(Transcript: **Xavier**,line101) and there is an over-emphasis on practicalities, such as the use of radio aids. The consequence for the deaf students is that they and their peers are constantly reminded of the deafness and of the difference from the normal that this implies.

### **The role of teachers of the deaf**

Apart from placement issues, the medical model is used by local authorities and schools to justify the presence in the school of teachers of the deaf and teaching assistants. This investigation has provided evidence that the deaf students do not themselves recognise the role of the teacher of the deaf and how it might impact on their learning. This is not to argue that teachers of the deaf do not have expertise which they are employing to the advantage of deaf students but rather that the students themselves are often not aware of how or to what extent the teacher of the deaf is influencing their day-to-day experience. The findings from this study replicate in large measure the findings of the RNID study (2002) with respect to teachers of the deaf.

In the light of this study, it is recommended that teachers of the deaf reappraise the nature of the role they have and that they become more personally involved with the deaf students, leaving the students in no doubt who they are, about the nature of their role and how supportive they might be. The students often associate teachers of the deaf with technical issues such as hearing aids and classroom amplification. The teachers of the deaf could play an enhanced role in acting as advocates for the students and listening closely to what they are saying about their own experiences which they may want conveyed to the teachers. The

evidence from this study is that deaf students often find it difficult to convey their concerns to their teachers with enough impact to bring about changes. They cope with what is presented but recognise the disadvantages.

The students have much to say about teaching assistants. Teaching assistants are present in the classroom because they have become the main way that schools and local authorities provide for students who are perceived to 'have learning difficulties.' Teaching assistants are aware that they are employed to assist a named student because the student is seen to 'have' special educational needs. It is recommended that teaching assistants are given training aimed at moving their mindset away from a medical model towards a more student-centred role which focuses on their inclusion both in academic and social contexts. The evidence from this study and the RNID study (2002) is that students appreciate having the support of an adult, such as a teaching assistant, but they would prefer that this is not consequent purely on the fact that they are deaf and that the relationship is not based solely on the deafness. The expertise of a teaching assistant needs to be as much about interpersonal skills related to communication and listening as to expertise on the medical and technical aspects of deafness. They also need to be sensitive to the fact that their mere presence can disrupt the formation and maintenance of friendships. A partnership of equals in the learning process would be more appropriate between the student and the teaching assistant than one of expert and client.

Although the social model highlights the need to consider the environment in which learning takes place, there is little evidence from this study that the social model and its principles would be particularly useful in practical terms when addressing the educational requirements of deaf students. The students were very aware of what it means to be normal and they indicate they would prefer to be seen as normal people who happen to be deaf, rather than to be identified as deaf people. However there was no evidence that the students themselves did not regard themselves as deaf and they did not provide evidence that they aspired to a situation in which

their deafness could be almost ignored as the social model suggests it might.

### **Members of the community?**

Another important area which has been highlighted by the current study is that of inclusion in mainstream schools. Although much has been written about inclusion and exactly what 'inclusion' may involve for deaf students, the evidence from the current study suggests that much more needs to be done. Some of the deaf students provide evidence that they do not always regard themselves as full members of the school community, either in terms of their classroom learning or with regard to their social relationships. Some of the students suggest that other students do not regard them as fully 'included'. There are more obvious issues that might prevent students who are deaf feeling fully included, such as bullying and social isolation, but in addition, there are more ongoing and day-to-day challenges in making and sustaining friends.

Deaf children have been shown to be especially vulnerable to bullying and its effects (Bauman and Pero, 2011). It is recommended that particular attention is given to bullying issues in schools, where the deaf student may be the only deaf student in the school and in situations in which the student is vulnerable to stigmatisation by other pupils.

The analysis of the data provides evidence that the students have issues with maintaining friendships. In reading what students have to say about their friendships, the concept of resilience is particularly relevant. The deaf students suggest that they need to work hard at maintaining friendships and that sometimes they rely upon their deaf peers outside the school community, rather than their classroom peers, to provide reliable friendship.

It is understood that the area of adolescent friendships is complex and does not readily encourage active external input. However, deaf students are particularly vulnerable and susceptible to social isolation and, at the very least, the pastoral care system in schools should recognise the

particular difficulties that deaf students may have and be sensitive to their needs.

A recurrent theme throughout the current study has been the problem of noise. Noise is a risk factor that affects deaf students more than any other students and which has important implications for their classroom experience. The majority of classrooms in mainstream schools are not constructed to comply with the current building regulations as they affect deaf students. Even in well-controlled classrooms, noise creates a problem. But as the students describe, in classrooms which are not fully controlled by the teachers, communication from the students becomes impossible at times and leaves them feeling frustrated and isolated.

Understanding the relationship between noise and the learning experience of deaf students is a technical matter and requires specialist expertise. It is recommended that teachers of the deaf are encouraged to accompany deaf students who are under their charge as they move from lesson to lesson and identify specific learning environments which are potentially too noisy for the students. It is further recommended that the teachers of the deaf use their expertise and their influence with the management of the school to modify the acoustic environment and to make it more user-friendly for deaf students.

Within the data, there is evidence that the students would like their teachers to have more training in order to better understand them and their particular needs. The students describe varying levels of deaf awareness which their teachers exhibit, ranging from almost a complete denial that any awareness is called for to teachers who show exceptional sensitivity and who are prepared to make adaptations in order to accommodate the needs of a deaf student in their class. In-service training of teachers relating to deaf awareness should be informed by the risk and resilience model. Deaf awareness training should not be limited to technical matters such as the causes of deafness, how deafness is described technically and the use of supportive technology, but should cover the development of skills relating to empathy, effective relationships, listening skills and ways in which small changes can have

an impact on the students beyond their possible additional demand on the teacher.

## Conclusion

What emerges from the evidence in this study is that the classroom experience of deaf students is finely balanced and confronts the students with daily challenges which their hearing peers do not experience. Enabling deaf students to experience the classroom in the way that their hearing peers do is what the deaf students want for themselves, in their words 'to be normal.' The deaf students are aware that small changes make a disproportionate difference to the way they feel about school and the outcomes that can be expected. These small outcomes may seem tantalisingly close from the student's perspective but all too often, it is their own intervention that will make the difference and direct their learning towards a positive outcome.

The data from the participants in this study reflects in many instances the adaptability and stamina of students who face daily challenges. Not to learn from these students about their experience would be to overlook a rich source of information on how schools and teaching might be improved and the under-performance of deaf children addressed.

The last word is for Irene, a participant in the research. Her desire is for adults in the classroom and her peers to extend their own experience by sharing in hers, an aim that would, if carried out, transform the experience of everyone:

**Irene:** "... at school, um... the deaf awareness is good but I...personally I think it could be improved...better - not with just the teachers, but with everyone. (*Who do you mean?*) Like um all the students, all the teachers like the staff I just think like they should have like one day –just a special day- about what it's like to be deaf and about all the deaf awareness. And then that will get everybody to understand but that could be really hard to like organise because it's a school, and how people will feel about it. Yeah, that's one thing that I would love to happen." (496-502)



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# APPENDIX 1

## Faith

1 *F, What I would like you to do to start with is to think of a time when something*  
2 *happened to you in class that you thought should be encouraged because it seemed to*  
3 *you, in your opinion, to be an example of what should happen in classrooms and it*  
4 *helps you learn.*

5  
6 I like it when the teacher gives you the powerpoint of the lesson because I can then  
7 keep up with the lesson (OK) so that, like, just give you a powerpoint of what they've  
8 done in the lesson. That's helpful. So it helps you to learn 'cos then if you've missed  
9 something in a lesson, you can look at it when you get home.

10  
11 *That's excellent. Thank you. Think of a time in class when something happened that*  
12 *you thought shouldn't happen. It seemed to be, in your opinion, an example of what*  
13 *should not happen in classrooms because it prevented you from learning.*

14  
15 Um...It's quite difficult when you get there late, 'cos I have a teacher of the deaf I  
16 see, like and one lesson I turned up late and ...because I had a radio aid, I have to give  
17 it to the teacher -because she had already started the lesson and everyone else was sat  
18 down. I had to quickly find a chair but I did not have time to give her the radio aid, so  
19 I missed the majority of the lesson, 'cos...it was too embarrassing to get it out and  
20 give it to her in front of the whole class.

21  
22 *You said 'teacher of the deaf'. What sort of help do you get?*

23  
24 Um... she comes to my school once a week and she goes over any work I don't  
25 understand or makes sure that I'm feeling happy with what I am doing or if I've got  
26 any problems at all related.

27  
28 *Do you have any help in class?*

29  
30 I have a TA in class.

31  
32 *How often?*

33  
34 I don't have them in every single lesson. I think it's about twenty hours a week, I  
35 reckon.

36  
37 *Can we come back to that?*

38  
39 Yes, that's fine. Yes.

40  
41 *That's good then. Think of a time when something happened to you in class that*  
42 *helped you communicate well with other people or helped you to understand what*  
43 *others were saying to you.*

44  
45 I find it easier to go out of class when we are doing group work. If I really have to  
46 stay in class, I like it when they sit in a little circle so that I can see what they are all  
47 saying. That's quite helpful.

48  
49 *Why do you prefer to go out?*

50

## Faith

51 Because the classroom can be really noisy and for me, trying to work in a group in a  
52 class, is just a nightmare. I do Drama GCSE (*Yes*) I can't keep up.

53  
54 *What effect does it have on you going out?*

55  
56 It makes you feel less normal, if you like. Because everyone knows you're going out  
57 because you can't hear very well and then they kind of exclude you a little bit?-  
58 having to go out.

59  
60 *OK. This almost follows on from what you've just said, so we will stick with it. Think*  
61 *of a time when something happened to you in class that made it difficult for you to*  
62 *communicate with others or you did not understand what others were saying to you.*  
63

64 (Pause)..... When people are shouting across the room. Like 'cos obviously what I  
65 say - Drama is a very practical lesson, so obviously you've got less control if you like  
66 of the class. Then they can get really excitable and shouting; then it sometimes gets  
67 harder to hear what everyone is saying.

68  
69 *Give me some idea of how often it feels like that in class.*

70  
71 Well it's probably mainly Drama or maybe Science, when we do practicals. It's very  
72 discussion-based. We do have sometimes in RE...like, discussion debates- like a  
73 whole class debate and that can be very challenging, trying to do a debate, fifteen and  
74 fifteen students on each side and its ...my TA has to write notes so that I can try to  
75 keep up - but it's not the same.

76  
77 *Do the other students realise that you're having difficulty? Do they try and help you*  
78 *out?*

79  
80 They do appreciate that I'm finding it difficult but obviously it's hard for them to  
81 know exactly what they need to do to be able to help.

82  
83 *OK. Right. That's the introduction over. What we are going to do now is just think of*  
84 *some of these other things, alright, and I don't mind if you say the same things that*  
85 *you've just said again (Yes) So what I'd like you to do now is to talk about your*  
86 *lessons - anything you like (OK) -any particular lessons- or talk about what happens*  
87 *during the day.. I really want to know what it's like for you as far as your lessons are*  
88 *concerned.*

89  
90 OK. My lessons. I have three lessons with a TA... um... I don't do PE. I'm pulled out  
91 from PE and I have a tutorial with the TA and they go anywhere that I can't do. Not  
92 that I can't do necessarily, but well ....like vocabulary - I struggle to understand  
93 certain words like in science. They'll go over Science with me -that's quite useful.  
94 And then I find that quite nice, because, not only am I having time out and going over  
95 some work, it gives me a chance to get ready for the next lesson, if you like, because  
96 it's just ....it can be so tiring, trying to listen to the teacher all the time. That's quite  
97 nice. Um...

98  
99 *Tell me about your interaction with the teachers.*

100

## Faith

101 Most teachers are really good – I mean they do...I'm quite shy, to be honest, 'cos...  
102 um... in a lesson when you've got 30 children in a room and you can't hear what the  
103 teacher's saying or you don't fully understand the work, it can be quite embarrassing,  
104 putting your hand up in front of 29 other students and saying 'Actually, miss, I don't  
105 understand what you have just said. Can you say that again?' I just keep quiet and I  
106 don't say anything until the end of the lesson.

107

108 *Right. While you're sitting there, keeping quiet, how do you feel?*

109

110 Um... I tend to get a bit anxious because I'm worried now that I can't do the work  
111 'cos I don't understand what the teacher's just said and it goes in a vicious cycle....  
112 'I give up, I can't do the work.' And then the teacher says 'You need to tell me in the  
113 lesson, not after the lesson.'

114

115 *Are the teachers aware?*

116

117 They have recently become more aware, like I've had to tell them, 'Actually, No, I  
118 don't understand what you are saying sometimes.' So they are trying to think of  
119 strategies to let them know without it being embarrassing. So like just writing it down  
120 on a piece of paper, and leaving a piece of paper there for them to see and then they'll  
121 come over and have a word or... waiting until everyone else starts their work and then  
122 going up and asking them... or just simple little things like that. Or going before the  
123 lesson, if you think you're struggling a bit with that topic. They'd say to us 'OK,  
124 well go at break.'

125

126 *Do you think some teachers' deaf awareness is better than others?*

127

128 Definitely.

129

130 *Tell me about that.*

131

132 Some teachers are really undeaf-aware, like the Maths teacher- he's also my form  
133 tutor. Well I've just had to move down, because he was playing really loud music in  
134 class and he used to go really fast explaining things and yes, I could hear him, but I  
135 was having to listen to him, trying to process what he was saying and then do the  
136 work - but it took me ages to, like, understand what he was saying, if you know what I  
137 mean?

138 (Yes) So then I'd fall behind with the work because I was like, 'I don't understand'  
139 and then...but he wasn't very...I don't know, what's the word? - he didn't really  
140 understand why I was finding it difficult, so then he wouldn't try to change it.

141

142 *Do you have any idea why he found it difficult to understand?*

143

144 I think it was because he was going so fast - some of the maths things are quite  
145 difficult concepts (Yes) like algebra....Trigonometry...um...

146

147 *Do you think that he understood how deaf you are?*

148

149 He's been my form tutor for five years and then...um...when I went in year 7...

150 (laughing) I've had him since Year 9 as a teacher - but when I went in Year 7, he said



## Faith

- 151 to me 'I'm going to treat you as normal, just like everyone else. I'm going to make no  
152 allowances for the fact that you're deaf.' That's what he said when I first started. To  
153 me, yeah, that can be a good thing, because you don't like being seen as different  
154 from everyone else but then there are times when actually, yes, you do need those  
155 little allowances. Do you know what I mean?  
156  
157 *I know exactly what you mean. Yes.*  
158  
159 Like...um ...it's a difficult balance to get right, because you want to be treated the  
160 same (Yes) but when it gets to the point when you can't understand the work or you're  
161 not hearing very well – it's difficult then.  
162  
163 *So what would you like him to have done?*  
164  
165 What I would have like him to have done....I would have like him to have listened to  
166 me.  
167  
168 *What would you have told him?*  
169  
170 I would have told him exactly how I found it.  
171  
172 *What would you have said?*  
173  
174 Um...well I would have said to him the fact that I didn't like the fact that he was  
175 playing music and that he needed to slow down a little bit when he was explaining.  
176 The other frustrating thing was, he wasn't only quick, he made jokes in the lesson, so  
177 he went off topic at some times- and then it was difficult to focus on the topic 'cos he  
178 was going off on a rant and I just got a bit frustrated, and then it didn't help if he set  
179 loads of work at the end of the lesson, so you weren't exactly doing any proper work  
180 in the lesson. Because I get tired really easily at the end of the day; it's quite stressful  
181 trying to do five pages of maths.  
182  
183 *Um...OK. That's really interesting. Is there a teacher that you think gets it right?*  
184  
185 Pardon?  
186  
187 *Is there one of your teachers, that you think he or she gets it right?*  
188  
189 Yes.  
190  
191 *Tell me about that.*  
192  
193 My English teacher, she's very aware of how difficult it can be for me. She is... like  
194 today for example, my radio aid wasn't working very well, so I had to tell her – 'Miss,  
195 it's been playing up', because it was sounding really different. And then, I told her,  
196 and she goes, 'Well, let me know if you find it difficult.' I mean I do get a bit anxious  
197 in lessons sometimes. I think that's due to the fact that I'm worrying about not doing  
198 it right, because I can be a bit of a perfectionist. (Yes) Then I worry about 'Am I doing  
199 the right work? Am I doing the right thing? Have I heard it right?' (Yes) And she...  
200 um ...she can tell when I'm not understanding it properly, so instead of asking me in

## Faith

201 front of the whole class, like 'cos everyone is really silent in my English class when  
202 they are working, she'll write it on a piece of paper like 'Ask me what the problem  
203 is'. And then...um...

204  
205 *You smile when you say that. You like her, don't you? (Yes) I can understand why.*

206  
207 Yes, she's the one teacher who's actually sensitive.

208  
209 *She's the only one that's sensitive?*

210  
211 Pardon

212  
213 *You're saying that she's the only one who's sensitive?*

214  
215 Yes, well not sensit (sic).....Like -some teachers - they don't get the proper, the full  
216 picture, if you like. Some people...some teachers do try their best. Like I have told  
217 my TAs what I need the teachers to do - this is what I need the teachers to do...

218  
219 *What have you told them?*

220  
221 Like it would be helpful if they printed off the powerpoints, like I said earlier.  
222 Because it's really difficult for me as a deaf person to really listen to the teacher and  
223 write at the same time. Because I lip read a lot, even though I can hear well....

224  
225 *Probably we all lip-read - you know that, don't you?*

226  
227 Yes, I think it's just that extra...

228  
229 *You need it -just that bit extra.*

230 *Tell me about the TAs. Who are they? How useful are they? What do they do?*

231  
232 My TAs... Well, one of my TAs, I've had since Year 2. She's still with me now (Yes)  
233 So that's been really nice -going through that journey-

234  
235 *Why is that nice?*

236  
237 'Cos she's got to know me as a character and knows what my strengths are and what  
238 my weaknesses are. So she knows how to best use her time. But it is getting more  
239 difficult now, getting to the age where I am, because I'm getting older. Having TAs  
240 has been really helpful and without them, I would probably have done a lot worse  
241 than I have, 'cos I do really well. But you're getting to that age now where you just  
242 want to be the same as everyone else - not having to wear a radio aid, not having to  
243 have a TA. So recently...she used to sit by me all the time in the lessons -so there  
244 used to be a spare seat next to me. (Yes) And she used to sit next to me all the time.

245  
246 *What effect did that have then?*

247  
248 Well, it was really good because she used to ask me, 'Do you understand the work?'  
249 just making sure I understood every bit. It sometimes got a bit - I don't know, what's  
250 the word - like they were looking over you all the time. (Yes) And now I just need

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251 that space a little bit. I've asked her to move just that bit further away so that I can sit  
252 next to my friends (Yes) And then if I need her, I put my hand up or just look at her  
253 and say 'Can I have some help?'  
254  
255 *Are you able to say that to them?*  
256  
257 I'm actually really shy... so it will take me....I have to do it really subtly like... .Yes  
258 You kind of sometimes don't want to ask for help because you're worried you'll look  
259 a bit...  
260  
261 *But are you worried about upsetting them?*  
262  
263 A little bit because I had to ask my SENCO at school to have a word with them, to get  
264 them to move, because I was worried I would say it in a way that could upset them or  
265 offend them?  
266  
267 *How did it go, when you said that to the SENCO?*  
268  
269 She was fine about it. She told her and my TA came up to me and said, 'Why didn't  
270 you just ask me?' (Laughing?) I said, 'Well because I was too shy.'  
271  
272 *It's alright now.*  
273  
274 It's alright now.  
275  
276 *And it's better, is it?*  
277  
278 A little bit – it's only been in place for the last couple of weeks.  
279  
280 *Tell me more about the SENCO, how much you have to do with the SENCO?*  
281  
282 The SENCO. I don't really talk to her a lot but I do have a good enough relationship  
283 with her to go to her if I have a problem or if I am finding something difficult.  
284  
285 *So she's approachable?*  
286  
287 She's approachable, yes.  
288  
289 *So you feel less shy with her?*  
290  
291 Um... um... not sure. I mean, it's sometimes difficult, talking to your TA, especially  
292 the one of them, because she has known me for so long. Because we're so close, we  
293 do worry about saying certain things because you don't want to upset her or do  
294 anything. (That's right)  
295 But I mean the good thing about my TA is that if you tell her, because she has known  
296 me for so long, she can help me. And so can my SENCO, 'cos she's obviously had  
297 lots of experience and she's got good relationship with all the teachers. So for  
298 instance, because I've been becoming more anxious, she had a word with all the  
299 teachers to leave me a table near the door... um...and I haven't been hearing as well,  
300 because my radio aid has been playing up, so she's been telling the teachers that, and

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in Drama, they were doing some repair work in the Drama studio. So they had to put us into a different room. It was the Dance studio which has got a really high ceiling – it's really like an arena- and we had a film lesson which goes towards our final GCSE grade in that room. An...d...um...I found it really difficult to hear in that room. (Yes) It was impossible. My Drama teacher, to be fair, did come up to me at the end and say, 'You did really well under the circumstances, because I could tell that you were finding that really difficult but my TA couldn't do anything about it because it was group work.

*It's interesting you talk about 'Because now I'm my age' could you just think back on – you've been in school all the time ever since you were 11- just think back on it – has it changed from when you were little to where you are now?*

Yes.

*How has it changed? What's different now?*

*Think of the whole experience. What has it all been like?*

Well...um...I obviously can't remember my first few years at school very well because I was very young.

*I was thinking more of secondary school.*

OK. Secondary school...um... I think especially the transition from Year 6 to Year 7 . On Year 6 to Year 8 or 9, I was quite dependent on I think...I relied on my TAs quite a lot. I think as I got older, I think not only have I got more independent, I have wanted to become more independent. So that's been a kind of influence on me, because I've been more independent.

*OK. Let's move on a little bit. Other students.*

Other students.

*Tell me about... let's start with your close group of friends and then think about other things. Are you the only deaf child in your school?*

There's two other deaf people.

*OK. Do you know them?*

Yes, one of them's in my class.

*Oh really, there's two in the same class.*

Yes. It's very unusual.

*Yes, it is very unusual. Tell me about her.*

She's not as deaf as me. She has two hearing aids but it's quite difficult, because the only thing we have in common is the fact that we're deaf. That's about it. (Because?)

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We have different interests. um...yeah, we do get on and we share the same TA which is good and it's useful because we share the same radio aids – so we only have one microphone to give to the teacher. So yes, it does have its advantages. But even though there is two deaf students in the school, you do often feel like you are the only one that's deaf 'cos she copes really well with deafness. Well, quite a lot of the time, you can't even tell she's deaf. I think people can tell that I'm slightly more deaf than her.

*How do you think they can tell?*

I think she hides her deafness really well whereas I'd be more confident, slightly more confident, but not totally confident really. But she tends to hide hers under her hair, but I tend just to put it over the hair? (Laugh) I think it's because she became deaf later on in life, whereas I was born deaf.

*You've got implants?( Yes) Two?*

Yes. Well, Yes I do wear two when I'm at school. I don't really like it.

*That's that student. Now tell me about your friends.*

Friends. Well, I don't tend to have an awful lot of friends. I've always struggled with friendships. I think it's 'cos it's a two way system. I worry about how they will react to talking to me, whether they will feel scared to talk to me because yes, they know I'm deaf, but they do worry about 'What happens if she says that again?' I do hear very well, with my deafness I think. So I can.... Some people feel they cannot talk to me and then I think I'm a bit shy to talk to them, in case they are a bit offish with me.

*Are they offish with you?*

I get really paranoid that they will be... um ...I think it's also because I'm quite a shy person, like deep down. I actually act really confident. But deep down I'm quite shy.

*Mm. What do you mean by that? What do you mean by 'I am shy'?*

I think if I approach someone, that they'll judge me for... in a sense...being deaf ..like because I have to give the radio aid and everything and I think they might think 'How well can she actually hear?' (Mm) I mean, we do have like a ...people you're not necessarily friends with, but people you know at school.

*To what extent are other students indifferent to you and are any of them actually unkind to you?*

No, I mean, I think I've been really lucky as a deaf person. I ...you do hear stories about the deaf being bullied but I do get the occasional tease, but I just brush it off.

*OK Tell me about the tease?*

Um... Well, not so much now but it's quite upsetting because my friend's someone who does it. One lesson for instance my aid wasn't there and I didn't hear the science

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401 work and we went out as a group and I said to them, 'Can you explain the work to me  
402 please because I'm not totally sure I know what it is' – I like reassurance really. And  
403 they said, 'Oh F, you're deaf, but you can hear perfectly fine. You have a radio aid,  
404 you have implants. Don't make excuses 'cos you're deaf.' I go, 'I didn't hear it.'  
405 'Well go and ask yourself then.' 'I didn't hear it'. Oh F stop it.'

406  
407 *How long ago was this?*

408  
409 Pardon?

410  
411 *How long ago was this, F? When was this?*

412  
413 About a year ago, six months ago... a year?

414  
415 *It's still in your mind, is it?*

416  
417 Well no, because they do still make the occasional prod?

418  
419 *How do you handle that? How do you deal with it?*

420  
421 Brush it off.

422  
423 *Brush it off.*

424  
425 You get used to it.

426  
427 *Are you good at brushing things off?*

428  
429 Most of the time.

430  
431 *And if you can't brush it off, how does it make you feel?*

432  
433 I go and talk to someone.

434  
435 *Do you have a best friend?*

436  
437 No, not really.

438  
439 *Do you have a group of friends?*

440  
441 Yes, friends at Deaf Club

442  
443 *Oh, right. Tell me about that.*

444  
445 I get on really well with my deaf friends like because we understand each other a lot  
446 more. I think my mum and most of the other friends who see me with deaf people  
447 would say I am a lot more confident with them than I am with hearing people.

448  
449 *It may seem an obvious question, but why? What makes it different with other deaf*  
450 *students?*

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451  
452 'Cos they know where you're coming from.  
453  
454 *Which is?*  
455  
456 That you like being the same as everyone else. And that you can actually hear and  
457 yes, you're deaf but you're not stupid or anything.  
458  
459 *What aspects of your deafness do you think other people, other students, don't*  
460 *understand?*  
461  
462 I think hearing people do struggle with deaf awareness...  
463  
464 *Why?*  
465  
466 'Cos like at those times, they're all talking, whispering, turning their heads round. Yes  
467 I can hear but I actually do like lip-reading and I think I do depend on lip-reading. I  
468 can hear without lip-reading, but it makes it just that bit more easier to understand.  
469  
470 *OK um.. Right.. I think actually we've covered nearly everything on here. So you've*  
471 *..um... done brilliantly.(Thank you.) What I'd like you to think about now. Think*  
472 *about anything which you think might help me to understand your experience of*  
473 *school. Is there anything you think I haven't covered? Is there anything you think,*  
474 *'Well this is important.'*  
475 *If you can say exactly from your point of view- and remember this is anonymous - tell*  
476 *me what it's like.*  
477  
478 It can be tiring, it can be frustrating sometimes when you're trying to tell the teacher  
479 or your TA that you don't understand it or it can be frustrating when you're trying to  
480 listen to your friends. It can sometimes be isolating when...you can only have one or  
481 two friends, to be honest with you. There's one friend that...we're almost a  
482 'frenemy'. We get on; we don't get on. One minute we love each other; the next  
483 minute we hate each other. It's just a nightmare. And she can be a bit of a tease, a bit  
484 of a bully when she wants to be, but I'm one of those people who's looked out for  
485 them? I do find it hard sometimes. On Friday evening, I come home and I'm just  
486 shattered. I'll spend Saturday recovering and Sunday doing homework.  
487  
488 *What do you do on Saturdays?*  
489  
490 I don't go out a lot. No. I go to Deaf Club once a month.  
491  
492 *How often do you go?*  
493  
494 Once a month.  
495  
496 *Have you got abiding friends with the Deaf Club*  
497  
498 *What do you mean?*  
499  
500 *Those that you say, 'These are my deaf friends' Do you go out with them?*

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501

502 Yes. I went to stay with one of my deaf friends the other week.

503

504 *That's nice. You got on all right?*

505

506 Yes. It was good fun.

507

508 OK.



# APPENDIX 2

## APPENDIX 2

NAME	LINE NO	QUOTE	THEME
F	6	I like it when the teacher gives you the Powerpoint of the lesson	Help
F	15-20	I did not have time to give her the radio aid so I missed the majority of the lesson 'cos it was too embarrassing.	Anxiety - embarrassment
F	24-25	She goes over any work I don't understand or makes sure that I'm feeling happy with what I am doing...	Help -Teacher of the Deaf
F	30	I have a TA in class	Help -Teaching Assistant
F	34	I don't have them in every single lesson. I think it's about twenty hours a week	Help -Teaching Assistant
F	45-47	I find it easier to go out of class when we are doing group work. If I really have to stay in class, I like it when they sit in a little circle	Participation In Group work
F	51-52	the classroom can be really noisy and for me, trying to work in a group in a class is just a nightmare	Participation in Group work
F	56-57	It makes you feel less normal. Because everyone <u>knows</u> you're going out because you can't hear very well and then they kind of exclude you a little bit?	Anxiety - relationships
F	64-67	When people are shouting across the room..... Then they can get really excitable and shouting; then it sometimes gets harder to hear what everyone is saying	Noise in the classroom
F	72-74	sometimes in RE... like, discussion debates...that can be very challenging, trying to do a debate, fifteen and fifteen students on each side....	Noise in the classroom
F	74-75	my TA has to write notes so that I can try to keep up- but it's not the same.	Help -Teaching Assistant
F	80-81	it's hard for them to know exactly what they need to do to be able to help	Help -other students
F	92-93	I struggle to understand certain words like in science. They'll go over science with me -that's quite useful.	Help-Teaching Assistant
F	94-95	not only am I having time out and going over some work, it gives me a chance to get reading for the next lesson	Coping Strategies
F	96	it can be <u>so</u> tiring, trying to listen to the teacher all the time	tiring
F	102	in a lesson when you've got 30 children in a room and you can't hear what the teacher's saying...	Noise in the classroom
F	103-104	it can be quite embarrassing, putting your hand up in front of 29 other students and saying 'Actually, miss, I don't understand what you have just said...'	Anxiety - embarrassment
F	105-106	I just keep quiet and I don't say anything until the end of the lesson.	Coping Strategies
F	110	I tend to get a bit anxious because I'm worried now that I can't do the work 'cos I don't understand what the teacher's just said and it goes in a vicious cycle.	Anxiety -work
F	117-118	They have recently become more aware, like I've had to tell them, 'Actually, No I don't understand what you are saying sometimes.'	Deaf awareness
F	119	they(teachers) are trying to think of strategies to let them know without it being embarrassing	Anxiety - embarrassment
F	120	So like just writing it down on a piece of paper, and leaving a piece of paper there for them to see .....	Coping Strategies
F	132	Some teachers are really undeaf-aware, like the Maths teacher	Deaf awareness
F	133	I've just had to move down, because he was playing really loud music in class	Deaf awareness
F	135-	I was having to listen to him, like, trying to process what he was	Deaf awareness

	136	saying and then do the work -but it took me ages to like understand what he was saying...	
F	138-140	So then I'd fall behind with the work...he didn't really understand why I was finding it difficult so then he wouldn't try to change it	Deaf awareness
F	151-152	Teacher - 'I'm going to treat you as normal, just like everyone else. I'm going to make no allowances for the fact that you're deaf.'	Deaf awareness
F	154-155	there are times when actually, yes, you do need those little allowances	Insight
F	165	I would have liked him to have listened to me	Insight
F	176-178	he made jokes in the lesson, so he went off topic at sometimes- and then it was difficult to focus on the topic..... I just got a bit frustrated	Anxiety- work
F	180-181	I get tired really easily at the end of the day; it's quite stressful trying to do five pages of maths	tiring
F	193	My English teacher, she's very aware of how difficult it can be for me	Deaf awareness
F	196-198	I do get a bit anxious in lessons sometimes. I think that's due to the fact that I'm worrying about not doing it right.	Anxiety- work
F	200-202	so instead of asking me in front of the whole class, like 'cos everyone is really silent in my English class when they are working, she'll write it on a piece of paper	Coping Strategies
F	215-216	some teachers - they don't get the proper, the full picture, if you like.	Deaf awareness/ Insight
F	222-223	it's really difficult for me as a deaf person to really listen to the teacher and write at the same time	Problem/awareness
F	232-233	one of my TAs, I've had since Year 2....So that's been really nice- going through that journey	Help- Teaching Assistant
F	237-238	cos she's got to know me as a character and knows what my strengths are and what my weaknesses are	Insight
F	240-241	Having TAs has been really helpful and without them, I would probably have done a lot worse than I have 'cos I do really well	Help-Teaching Assistant
F	241-243	But you're getting to that age now where you just want to be the same as everyone else - not having to wear a radio aid, not having to have a TA.	Insight
F	248-251	Well it was really good because she used to ask me, 'Do you understand the work?' just making sure I understood every bit....now I just need that space a little bit	Insight
F	251-252	I've asked her to move just that bit further away so that I can sit next to my friends.	Insight
F	258	You kind of sometimes don't want to ask for help because you're worried you'll look a bit....	Anxiety- embarrassment
F	263-265	I had to ask my SENCO at school to have a word with them, to get them to move, because I was worried I would say it in a way that could upset them or offend them	Anxiety- relationships
F	269-270	She (SENCO) was fine about it. She told her and my TA came up to me and said 'Why didn't you just ask me?' (Laughing) I said, 'Well because I was too shy'	Help -SENCO
F	282-283	I don't really talk to her a lot but I do have a good enough relationship with her to go to her if I have a problem or if I am finding something difficult.	Help -SENCO
F	291-294	It's sometimes difficult talking to your TA...because we're so close, I do worry about saying certain things because you don't want to upset her or do anything.	Anxiety- relationships
F	295-296	The good thing about my TA is that if you tell her, because she has known me for so long, she can help me.	Help -Teaching Assistant
F	296-297	So can my SENCO 'cos she's obviously had lots of experience and she's got a good relationship with all the teachers	Help -SENCO
F	298-	because I've been becoming more anxious. She had a word with all	Help- SENCO/

	299	the teachers to leave me a table near the door.....	Anxiety
F	304-305	I found it really difficult to hear in that room. It was impossible	Anxiety- work
F	306-307	Drama teacher: you did really well under the circumstances, because I could tell that you were finding that really difficult	Deaf Awareness
F	307	my TA couldn't do anything about it because it was group work.	Participation in Group work
F	325-327	On Year 6 to Year 8 or 9...I relied on my TAs quite a lot. I think as I got older...not only have I got more independent, I have <u>wanted</u> to become more independent.	Resilience/Insight
F	349-350	She (other deaf person) has two hearing aids but it's quite difficult because the only thing we have in common is the fact that we're deaf.	Social -relationships
F	353-355	But even though there is two other deaf students in the school, you do often feel like you are the only one that's deaf 'cos she copes really well with deafness.	Insight
F	362-364	She tends to hide hers (aid) under her hair, but I tend just to put it over the hair? (Laugh) I think it's because she became deaf later on in life, whereas I was born deaf.	Insight
F	368	<i>You've got implants?</i> Yes I do wear two when I'm at school. I don't really like it.	Practical
F	372	I don't tend to have an awful lot of friends. I've always struggled with friendships	Anxiety - relationships - friends
F	373-375	I worry about how they will react... whether they will feel scared to talk to me because yes, they know I'm deaf, but they do worry... 'What happens if she says that again?'	Anxiety - relationships-friends
F	376-377	Some people feel they cannot talk to me and then I think I'm a bit shy to talk to them, in case they are a bit offish with me.	Anxiety-relationships - friends
F	381-382	I get really paranoid....because I'm quite a shy person, like deep down. I actually act really confident. But deep down I'm quite shy.	Insight /Anxiety
F	386	I think if I approach someone, that they'll judge me for...in a sense.. being deaf	Anxiety
F	394-395	I think I've been really lucky as a deaf person...you do hear stories about the deaf being bullied but I do get the occasional tease, but I just brush it off.	Resilience
F	400-402	One lesson...I didn't hear the science work...and I said to them, 'Can you explain the work...because I'm not totally sure I know what it is?' I like reassurance really.	Anxiety -work
F	403-405	They said, 'Oh F, you're deaf, but you can hear perfectly fine. You have a radio aid, you have implants. Don't make excuses 'cos you're deaf...Oh F stop it.'	Bullying
F	421	How do you handle that? How do you deal with it? Brush it off..... You get used to it. (425)	Resilience
F	437	Do you have a best friend? No, not really.	Social -relationships
F	445	I get on really well with my deaf friends like because we understand each other a lot more.	Social -relationships
F	446-447	I think my mum and most of the other friends who see me with deaf people would say I am a lot more confident with them than I am with hearing people.	Insight
F	452	<i>What makes it different with other deaf students?</i> 'Cos they know where you're coming from.	Insight
F	456-457	That you like being the same as everyone else. And that you can actually hear and yes, you're deaf but you're not stupid or anything.	Insight
F	462	I think hearing people do struggle with deaf awareness.	Deaf awareness

F	466-467	Cos like at those times, they're all talking, whispering, turning their heads round. Yes I can hear but I actually do like lip-reading and I think I do depend on lip-reading.	Deaf awareness/insight
F	468	I can hear without lip-reading, but It makes it just that bit more easier to understand.	Deaf awareness/insight
F	478-479	It can be tiring, it can be frustrating sometimes when you're trying to tell the teacher or your TA that you don't understand	Tiring
F	480-481	It can sometimes be isolating when...you can only have one or two friends, to be honest with you.	Social -relationships
F	481-485	There's one friend that...we're almost a frenemy.....It's just a nightmare...she can be a bit of a tease, a bit of a bully...I do find it hard sometimes.	Social -relationships
F	485-486	I come home and I'm just shattered. I'll spend Saturday recovering and Sunday doing homework.	Tiring
F	490	I don't go out a lot.	Social-relationships

## APPENDIX 3

### APPENDIX 3

NAME	LINE NO	QUOTE	THEME
F	15-20	I did not have time to give her the radio aid so I missed the majority of the lesson 'cos it was too embarrassing.	Anxiety - embarrassment
F	103-104	it can be quite embarrassing, putting your hand up in front of 29 other students and saying 'Actually, miss, I don't understand what you have just said...'	Anxiety - embarrassment
F	119	they(teachers) are trying to think of strategies to let them know without it being embarrassing	Anxiety -embarrassment
F	258	You kind of sometimes don't want to ask for help because you're worried you'll look a bit....	Anxiety-embarrassment
F	56-57	It makes you feel less normal. Because everyone <u>knows</u> you're going out because you can't hear very well and then they kind of exclude you a little bit?	Anxiety - relationships
F	263-265	I had to ask my SENCO at school to have a word with them, to get them to move, because I was worried I would say it in a way that could upset them or offend them	Anxiety- relationships
F	291-294	It's sometimes difficult talking to your TA.....because we're so close, I do worry about saying certain things because you don't want to upset her or do anything.	Anxiety- relationships
F	372	I don't tend to have an awful lot of friends. I've always struggled with friendships	Anxiety - relationships - friends
F	373-375	I worry about how they will react... whether they will feel scared to talk to me because yes, they know I'm deaf, but they do worry... 'What happens if she says that again?'	Anxiety -relationships- friends
F	376-377	Some people feel they cannot talk to me and then I think I'm a bit shy to talk to them, in case they are a bit offish with me.	Anxiety- relationships - friends
F	386	I think if I approach someone, that they'll judge me for...in a sense... being deaf	Anxiety
F	110	I tend to get a bit anxious because I'm worried now that I can't do the work 'cos I don't understand what the teacher's just said and it goes in a vicious cycle.	Anxiety -work
F	176-178	he made jokes in the lesson, so he went off topic at sometimes- and then it was difficult to focus on the topic..... I just got a bit frustrated	Anxiety- work
F	196-198	I do get a bit anxious in lessons sometimes. I think that's due to the fact that I'm worrying about not doing it right.	Anxiety- work
F	304-305	I found it really difficult to hear in that room. It was impossible.	Anxiety- work
F	400-402	One lesson...I didn't hear the science work...and I said to them, ' Can you explain the work...because I'm not totally sure I know what it is?' I like reassurance really.	Anxiety -work
F	403-405	They said, 'Oh F, you're deaf, but you can hear perfectly fine. You have a radio aid, you have implants. Don't make excuses 'cops you're deaf...Oh F stop it.'	Bullying
F	94-95	not only am I having time out and going over some work, It gives me a chance to get reading for the next lesson	Coping Strategies
F	105-106	I just keep quiet and I don't say anything until the end of the lesson.	Coping Strategies
F	120	So like just writing it down on a piece of paper, and leaving a piece of paper there for them to see .....	Coping Strategies
F	200-202	so instead of asking me in front of the whole class, like 'cos everyone is really silent in my English class when they are working, she'll write it on a piece of paper	Coping Strategies

F	117-118	They have recently become more aware, like I've had to tell them, 'Actually, No I don't understand what you are saying sometimes.'	Deaf awareness
F	132	Some teachers are really undeaf-aware, like the Maths teacher	Deaf awareness
F	133	I've just had to move down, because he was playing really loud music in class	Deaf awareness
F	135-136	I was having to listen to him, like, trying to process what he was saying and then do the work -but it took me ages to like understand what he was saying.	Deaf awareness
F	138-140	So then I'd fall behind with the work...he didn't really understand why I was finding it difficult so then he wouldn't try to change it	Deaf awareness
F	151-152	Teacher - 'I'm going to treat you as normal, just like everyone else. I'm going to make no allowances for the fact that you're deaf.'	Deaf awareness/ Discrimination
F	193	My English teacher, she's very aware of how difficult it can be for me	Deaf awareness
F	215-216	some teachers - they don't get the proper, the full picture, if you like.	Deaf awareness/ Insight
F	306-307	Drama teacher: you did really well under the circumstances, because I could tell that you were finding that really difficult	Deaf awareness
F	462	I think hearing people do struggle with deaf awareness.	Deaf awareness
F	466-467	Cos like at those times, they're all talking, whispering, turning their heads round. Yes I can hear but I actually do like lip-reading and I think I do depend on lip-reading.	Deaf awareness/insight
F	468	I can hear without lip-reading, but it makes it just that bit more easier to understand.	Deaf awareness/insight
F	6	I like it when the teacher gives you the powerpoint of the lesson	Help
F	80-81	it's hard for them to know exactly what they need to do to be able to help	Help -other students
F	269-270	She (SENCO) was fine about it. She told her and my TA came up to me and said 'Why didn't you just ask me?' (Laughing) I said, 'Well because I was too shy'	Help -SENCO
F	282-283	I don't really talk to her a lot but I do have a good enough relationship with her to go to her if I have a problem or if I am finding something difficult.	Help -SENCO
F	296-297	So can my SENCO 'cos she's obviously had lots of experience and she's got a good relationship with all the teachers	Help -SENCO
F	298-299	because I've been becoming more anxious. She had a word with all the teachers to leave me a table near the door.....	Help- SENCO/ Anxiety
F	24-25	She goes over any work I don't understand or makes sure that I'm feeling happy with what I am doing....	Help -Teacher of the Deaf
F	30	I have a TA in class	Help -Teaching Assistant
F	34	I don't have them in every single lesson. I think it's about twenty hours a week	Help -Teaching Assistant
F	74-75	my TA has to write notes so that I can try to keep up- but it's not the same.	Help -Teaching Assistant
F	92-93	I struggle to understand certain words like in science. They'll go over science with me -that's quite useful.	Help-Teaching Assistant
F	232-233	one of my TAs, I've had since Year 2....So that's been really nice-going through that journey	Help- Teaching Assistant
F	240-241	Having TAs has been really helpful and without them, I would probably have done a lot worse that I have 'cos I do really well	Help-Teaching Assistant
F	295-296	The good thing about my TA is that if you tell her, because she has known me for so long, she can help me.	Help -Teaching Assistant
F	154-155	there are times when actually, yes, you do need those little allowances	Insight
F	165	I would have liked him to have listened to me	Insight



F	237-238	cos she's got to know me as a character and knows what my strengths are and what my weaknesses are	Insight
F	241-243	But you're getting to that age now where you just want to be the same as everyone else - not having to wear a radio aid, not having to have a TA.	Insight
F	248-251	Well it was really good because she used to ask me, 'Do you understand the work?' just making sure I understood every bit....now I just need that space a little bit	Insight
F	251-252	I've asked her to move just that bit further away so that I can sit next to my friends.	Insight
F	353-355	But even though there is two other deaf students in the school, you do often feel like you are the only one that's deaf 'cos she copes really well with deafness.	Insight
F	362-364	She tends to hide hers (aid) under her hair, but I tend just to it over the hair? (Laugh) I think it's because she became deaf later on in life, whereas I was born deaf.	Insight
F	446-447	I think my mum and most of the other friends who see me with deaf people would say I am a lot more confident with them than I am with hearing people.	Insight
F	452	What makes it different with other deaf students? 'Cos they know where you're coming from.	Insight
F	456-457	That you like being the same as everyone else. And that you can actually hear and yes, you're deaf but you're not stupid or anything.	Insight
F	381-382	I get really paranoid....because I'm quite a shy person, like deep down. I actually act really confident. But deep down I'm quite shy.	Insight /Anxiety
F	64-67	When people are shouting across the room..... Then they can get really excitable and shouting; then it sometimes gets harder to hear what everyone is saying	Noise in the classroom
F	72-74	sometimes in RE... like, discussion debates...that can be very challenging, trying to do a debate, fifteen and fifteen students on each side....	Noise in the classroom
F	102	In a lesson when you've got 30 children in a room and you can't hear what the teacher's saying.....	Noise in the classroom
F	45-47	I find it easier to go out of class when we are doing group work. If I really have to stay in class, I like it when they sit in a little circle	Participation In Group work
F	51-52	the classroom can be really noisy and for me, trying to work in a group in a class is just a nightmare	Participation In Group work
F	307	my TA couldn't do anything about it because it was group work.	Participation In Group work
F	222-223	it's really difficult for me as a deaf person to really listen to the teacher and write at the same time	Practical/awareness
F	368	You've got implants? Yes I do wear two when I'm at school. I don't really like it.	Practical
F	325-327	On Year 6 to Year 8 or 9...I relied on my TAs quite a lot. I think as I got older...not only have I got more independent, I have <u>wanted</u> to become more independent.	Resilience/Insight
F	394-395	I think I've been really lucky as a deaf person...you do hear stories about the deaf being bullied but I do get the occasional tease, but I just brush it off.	Resilience
F	421	How do you handle that? How do you deal with it? Brush it off..... You get used to it. (425)	Resilience
F	349-350	She (other deaf person) has two hearing aids but it's quite difficult because the only thing we have in common is the fact that we're deaf.	Social -relationships
F	437	Do you have a best friend? No. not really.	Social -relationships
F	445	I get on really well with my deaf friends like because we	Social -relationships

		understand each other a lot more.	
F	480-481	It can sometimes be isolating when...you can only have one or two friends, to be honest with you.	Social -relationships
F	481-485	There's one friend that...we're almost a frenemy.....It's just a nightmare...she can be a bit of a tease, a bit of a bully...I do find it hard sometimes.	Social -relationships
F	490	I don't go out a lot.	Social-relationships
F	96	it can be <u>so tiring</u> , trying to listen to the teacher all the time	tiring
F	180-181	I get tired really easily at the end of the day; it's quite stressful trying to do five pages of maths	tiring
F	478-479	It can be tiring, it can be frustrating sometimes when you're trying to tell the teacher or your TA that you don't understand	Tiring
F	485-486	I come home and I'm just shattered. I'll spend Saturday recovering and Sunday doing homework.	Tiring

## APPENDIX 4

## APPENDIX 4

NAME	LINE NO	THEME ANALYSIS - RESILIENCE	THEME
A	662-3	Why do you think she's like that? She might be jealous about the help what I've got really.	Bullying/ Resilience
A	396	<i>Does it (informing a visitor) embarrass you?</i> No, I've been going to the school with them like for three years now. So they know what I do and how I do it.	Resilience
B	529	(Deafness) It doesn't affect my life too much.	Resilience/ Insight
C	355	(Re Bullying) not very happy but I do try and keep my hopes up and I try and forget about it if I can	Resilience
C	194-9	I love talking to adults...I love talking to you...and I'm really confident. I could talk to a stranger I never met ...like cousins of my granddad	Resilience
C	43-4	I think it's just silly because there's no need for it. If you don't like 'em, just ignore them and don't do anything - that's what I do.	Resilience /Coping strategy
C	212-6	I try to please people...my Mum doesn't like that because I'll do anything really...I let people in my group go in front when I was already at the front.....	Resilience/ Anxiety -social
C	280-4	I either stare out of the windows...daydreaming...or I'd look at something in the room that looks eye-catching to me...for the whole lesson...I can't do anything	Resilience/ Coping strategies
D	282-4	Not everyone likes you.....someone goes up to me and says...'Oh you're different' and that's just like 'whatever. I don't really care what you think. I do have other friends.'	Bullying /Resilience
D	300	like rude name-calling. I just deal with it...I just ignore them...it's fine. They're just being stupid really	Bullying /Resilience
D	353-6	in my English class there are two boys who are really rude to me...I was took out by my tutor - to go and talk to her (counsellor). I just told them, if it gets more serious, I'll tell you.	Bullying /Resilience
D	360-2	Cos I'm deaf I can't speak properly and that then comes to people like copying my voice. I'm just like 'Well I can't help it, can I, because I'm deaf. How would you like it if I did that?'	Bullying /Resilience
D	325-7	With bullying...if you don't like a person, why bother going up to them. That's the question I've always asked inside. Well, if they don't like me, why should I care?	Bullying/ Resilience
D	102-4	I'm sorry, but you need to speak a bit clearer because I won't be able to hear you. If you're mumbling, I won't be able to hear you. Speak properly and make sure I can see you	Resilience
D	111-2	You need to speak properly to me and you've just got to live with it 'cos it's not my fault I'm deaf, is it? OK?'	Resilience
D	207-8	No because I need to learn how to do things for myself- and how to try and hear myself	Resilience
D	220	<i>What do you do then?</i> (when class is noisy and understanding difficult) I'm just like I'll just have to deal with it.	Resilience
D	555	I play the guitar and people say that for a deaf child, I do have quite good rhythm you know	Resilience
D	341-4	(bullying) in the future...if you do that to someone, let's say, a police officer..... And it's like you can't do it all through your life, because no one is going to like you after a while.	Resilience/ Insight
D	440-2	in some schools they have special needs rooms...like whole classes for kids like deaf people....I find you shouldn't really do that like all the time 'cos they need to learn how...	Resilience/ Insight
D	443-4	to do stuff by yourself, like I said earlier, and personally I think that it's a bit	Resilience/

		stupid because like, when we go out in the world, no one is going to help them.	Insight
E	483-8	Sometimes all the students behind me they talk all the time and won't even learn so that's what the teacher has to go on shouting..... I'm feeling okay I'm not upset are not angry	resilience
F	394-5	I think I've been really lucky as a deaf person...you do hear stories about the deaf being bullied but I do get the occasional tease, but I just brush it off.	Resilience
F	421	How do you handle that? How do you deal with it? Brush it off..... You get used to it. (427)	Resilience
F	325-7	On Year 6 to Year 8 or 9...I relied on my TAs quite a lot. I think as I got older...not only have I got more independent, I have <u>wanted</u> to become more independent.	Resilience/ Insight
G	183-4	<i>Do you think you have extra difficulty because you are deaf?</i> Maybe but I don't think it's that big because I can still hear quite a lot when, like, it's noisy.	Resilience
G	72-3	<i>What do you do if they still don't take notice of you?</i> I would wait until like they have dealt with the class.. Then I would put my hand up when I was told to.	Resilience/ Coping Strategies
G	166-7	(Group work) I listen....sometimes if it's really noisy I might lip-read a little bit but most of the time I just listen - it's fine	Practical / Resilience
I	264-9	People at school - you get a variety of people just around you...boys ...are more challenging to deal with ...like I said their behaviour and that is transitional going through a child to an adult in mind and situations....they can be a bit immature-they might just go 'UGH' like they might be taking the mickey ...out of my speech	Insight/ resilience
I	40-47	as I'm going into Year 10 people will soon start to change because....you are more like adult like in your brain and you're...going into that transition...like from being like a child into an adulthood stage.	Insight/ resilience
I	286-8	There's nothing really that much that you can do about people's like minds, like how they behave in a certain way.	Insight/ resilience
J	391-3	when little kids at a theme park or something say 'What's that in your ear?' I'm like it helps me hear better and sometimes... they're not all like that. It's just that sometimes they don't get it and they just seem to stare	Insight/ resilience
J	479-80	they (parents) said when you go to senior school, you can have a sudden shock with homework and then they were amazed at how well I got on with it.	Resilience
J	650-51	(Re solving problems) I just sit and think -if I just sit back and think about what I'm doing and then go into it.	Resilience
J	246-7	If I do ever lose a friend from my new group of friends, I've still got the people I transferred with.	Resilience
J	204-5	I say..' I didn't hear it and...the volume is so low that I don't think that many other people...heard it either...so	Resilience/ Coping strategies

## APPENDIX 5

## APPENDIX 5

### Basic Information on the Student

CONFIDENTIAL

#### Information Sheet

<b>1. Student's name:</b>	
<b>2. Student's date of birth:</b>	
<b>3. Student's chronological age:</b>	
<b>4. Your name:</b>	
<b>5. Relationship to student:</b>	
<b>6. Parents/guardians (if different from above):</b>	
<b>7. Contact details</b>	
<b>a. Your address:</b>	
<b>b. Daytime phone number:</b>	
<b>c. Evening phone number:</b>	
<b>d. Mobile phone number:</b>	
<b>e. Fax number:</b>	
<b>f. Email address:</b>	
<b>8. Student's current educational placement:</b>	

**SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS**

**Does the student have on-going special educational needs? (Please tick)**

- ☐ Learning difficulties:
  - ☐ Moderate      ☐ Severe      ☐ Specific
- ☐ Autistic spectrum disorder
- ☐ Behavioural difficulties
- ☐ Communication difficulties
- ☐ Specific speech and/or language difficulties
- ☐ Visual/hearing difficulties
- ☐ Motor/movement problems (e.g. dyspraxia)
- ☐ Other physical difficulties

Other:

Please specify: .....  
.....  
.....

**Does the student have any medical conditions? Please specify? .....**

.....  
.....

**Please indicate if the student is on the school's SEN Register:**

- ☐ School Action
- ☐ School Action Plus
- ☐ Statement of Special Educational Needs

**If the student has a Statement of Special Educational Needs, when was it last amended/updated?**

.....  
.....  
.....

**During the interview will the student require any special arrangements?**

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_



# APPENDIX 6

## APPENDIX 6

### Parents' Permission Letter

Dear Parent,

Your son or daughter has shown an interest in participating in an educational research investigation. The research will investigate the experience of secondary aged deaf children in comprehensive schools. I wish to interview a small group of students who have previous experience of mainstream education. This research forms part of the work I am doing towards a Doctorate in Education at the Open University

The students will be told that their participation is purely voluntary and they are under no obligation to take part. Their commitment would be to agree to be interviewed individually for no longer than one hour and, later to help me to understand what the results might mean. The idea is to elicit their views on the experience of deaf children in mainstream classrooms.

Any information obtained during the interviews will be held in the strictest confidence and would not be revealed to anyone else. The interview would be sound recorded and later analysed for its content. Following the investigation, the sound recordings would be destroyed and would at no time be used for any other purpose.

Your son or daughter will be reassured that they can withdraw from study at any time and, should this arise, they will not be asked to give a reason.

When the study has been completed, the students will be given a summary of the main findings.

As your son or daughter has expressed an interest in taking part, I would be pleased if you give them your encouragement and permission to take part in what I am sure will be an interesting and positive experience for them.

Yours faithfully

Robin Bartlett BA. MSc. C.Psychol.

HPC registered PYL02333

Educational Psychologist

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Name of student.....Form.....

I----- give my consent for my son/daughter to be involved in a research investigation by Robin Bartlett.

I confirm that I am fully informed about the nature of investigation and understand the commitment my child has made. I understand my child can withdraw from the investigation at any time without the need to say why. The participation of my son/daughter will be strictly confidential. I further understand that at the conclusion of the investigation the recorded material will be destroyed. I understand that my child is entitled to be given a summary of the main findings of the report produced as result of this investigation.

Signed-----Date.....

## APPENDIX 7

## APPENDIX 7

### Students' Permission Letter

Dear Student,

The purpose of this letter is to invite you to take part in some research on the experience of deaf students in mainstream education. Before I can begin the main investigation, I need to talk to a group of students who have had experience of education in mainstream school.

I must make it clear from the start that your participation would be purely voluntary and you are under no obligation to say that you wish to take part. If you agree to take part, your commitment would be to agree to be interviewed and later to help me with analysing the results.

I will explain exactly what the research is about and why your participation would be important. You would be interviewed on your own and be invited to give your views on your experience of being a deaf student in a mainstream school. The interview should last up to an hour but it may end when you have said all you wish to say.

The interviews will be recorded in sound only. The purpose of this is to allow what you say to be analysed in detail following the interview.

You need to know that you can withdraw from this study at any time if you wish and you do not have to give a reason. All the information collected will be held in the strictest confidence. You will not be identified in any write-up of the research.

It is necessary to obtain your consent if you wish to take part.

If you think you would be interested, please sign the consent form at the bottom of this letter and pass it to me. I am sure that if you decide to take part you will enjoy what you asked to do and you will find it of considerable interest.

Robin Bartlett BA., MSc. C. Psychol. Educational Psychologist

---

**Permission to take part in research investigation with Robin Bartlett**

I----- confirm that I am willing to take part in the research investigation with Robin Bartlett.

I confirm that I have been fully informed about the nature of the investigation and I understand what I will be asked to do and extent of my commitment. I understand that I can withdraw from the investigation at any time and I would not need to say why. I have been told that throughout the investigation anything I say will remain anonymous and will not be revealed to other people. I understand that, at the conclusion of the investigation, all the recorded material will be destroyed. I also understand that I am entitled to read the final report produced as result of the investigation.

Signed----- Date.....

# APPENDIX 8

## **APPENDIX 8**

### **Introduction and Critical Incident**

#### **The Interview**

- 1) Think of a time when something happened to you in class that you felt should be encouraged because it seemed, in your opinion, to be an example of what should happen in classrooms to help you learn.
- 2) Think of a time in class when something happened to you that you felt should not happen because it seemed, in your opinion, to be an example of what should not happen in classrooms because it prevents you from learning.
- 3) Think of a time when something happened to you in class that helped you to communicate well with others or helped you to understand what others were saying to you.
- 4) Think of a time in class when something happened that made it difficult for you to communicate with others or when you did not understand what others were saying to you.
- 5) You can now talk about anything you like to do with school and what you think about it. You might think about:
  - Lessons
  - Teachers
  - Other students
  - Friendships
  - Help
- 6) You can just talk. You do not need to talk in any order. Just talk about things as you think about them.



# APPENDIX 9

## APPENDIX 9

### Letter to Regional Directors of The National Deaf Children's Society

14<sup>th</sup> August 2012

Dear

I am an educational psychologist who has worked with students of school age for more than 30 years. I completed my full time career as Principal Educational Psychologist for West Berkshire. I have also been a consultant educational psychologist and worked at the Xxxx Centre for over 8 years assessing deaf students. I have worked with staff from the NDCS for a number of years especially in relation to The Special Educational Needs Tribunal. I am currently engaged in a Doctorate with the Open University, investigating the experience of deaf students in mainstream classrooms. I have conducted a pilot study but now need to contact a small group of students who might be prepared to take part in this research. Xxxx has agreed to support me and he has suggested that I contact you to see whether you would be able to help me find students willing to participate in this programme.

The participation of students would of course be voluntary and would necessitate parental permission. I intend to interview students between the ages of 11 and 16 who have experienced a number of years in mainstream education. This investigation is not designed to involve students whose main form of communication is signing or who are in special school placements. The results of my pilot study suggest that giving deaf students 'a voice' in relation to their classroom experiences is appreciated by the students and has the potential to make an important contribution to the understanding of deaf students being educated in mainstream classrooms. I would be following well-established procedures in relation to safeguarding and ethical considerations and all my work is closely monitored and supervised by the Open University.

I am seeking to recruit students who are being educated in mainstream settings. Their commitment would be to participate in a sound-only recorded interview lasting approximately one hour and then help me to analyse the results. Anonymity would be assured for all the participants. The interviews will be home-based and not involve their schools or travel. I am based near Oxford and therefore, for practical reasons, I would prefer to recruit from the South East England Region.

I would be happy to have a telephone conversation with you to provide you with any further details you might require. I am prepared to be flexible about the timing of the interviews and would, for example, be willing to conduct some of them in holiday times, evenings or weekends, if this were more convenient for families. I need to complete the interviews by December 2012.

I would be most grateful for anything you could do to publicise this research and encourage families to contact me. The pilot study suggests that giving students a voice is well received.

Yours sincerely

Robin Bartlett B.A., M.Sc., C.Psychol.  
Chartered Educational Psychologist

## Acknowledgements

I am grateful to the students who participated so generously in the research: to my wife Cynthia for her unfailing encouragement and support ; to Katy Simmons , an inspired teacher, for insisting on the highest possible standards at every stage: to Sean Tremer for suggesting further areas for investigation and to the staff of the Open University for their advice throughout the study.